



SIKH VALUE SYSTEM AND SOCIAL CHANGE



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GURNAM KAUR

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Note ! The scholars are responsible for their own views.

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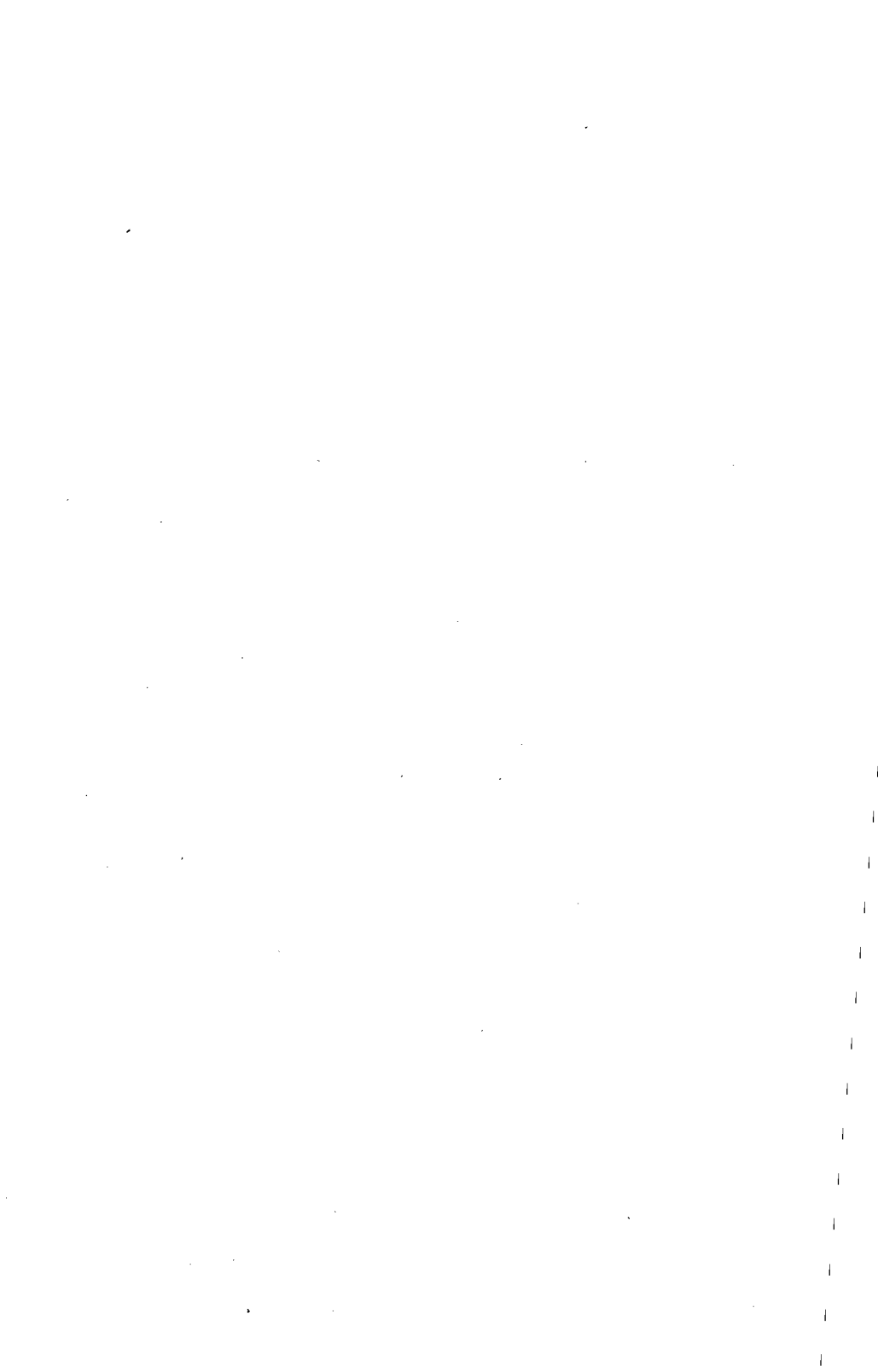
PREFACE

The present book "Sikh Value System and Social Change" comprises the papers, presented at a Seminar, sponsored by the U.G.C. and organised by the Department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies of the Punjabi University Patiala. The papers, included in this book focus on important issues of Sikh Studies. It is an attempt at presenting the Sikh Value System in the frame-work of Social Change. It makes an effort in the direction of establishing the theological perspective on Sikhism—the youngest religion of the world. The thrust is academic, which aims at making the study of religion, an intellectual discipline.

I trust, this book will arouse the interest of scholars and students, working in the domain of religious studies.

*Punjabi University
Patiala*

JOGINDER SINGH PUAR
Vice-Chancellor



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INTRODUCTION

I

Before the manifestation of the Sikh revelation, Hinduism and Islam were the two main prevalent religious thoughts in India. The Buddhism had receded into the background, rather vanished from the land of its origin and Hinduism had almost absorbed it into its fold. Of Jainism also, there were only the remains. All these main religions, which are proud of being considered among the prominent world religions, had limited themselves to mere formalism. They had deviated from the spiritual essence and were lost in ritualism. So they were going continuously on the path of decadence. Politically and socially the position was even worse than the religious one. We may visualize the whole picture of this all-round deteriorating state of affairs from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs and the works of Bhai Gurdas especially his ballads. Bhai Gurdas is the first theologian of Sikhism and his works are considered a key to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. He had the honour of being the scribe to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Before coming to the source, the basis of Sikh value system and the social transformation brought about by this system, first we should have a knowledge of the general situation existent at that time in the Indian society. That will facilitate us to evaluate the resultant all-round change in the personality of man, his out-look towards life and the change made possible by that out-look, and the transformation of whole society. We will make a brief review of the religious, political, economic and social situation of that period stepwise.

Religious situation : If we make thorough investigation of the whole social phenomenon we can easily penetrate into the deteriorated position of the religious traditions at that period. The thing known as religion had almost vanished from the scene and lost its spiritual essence. What was left were mere ritualism and formalism. The observations made by Bhai Gurdas of the

period before the appearance of Guru Nanak, have a deep meaning and special importance to highlight the prevalent situation. Bhai Gurdas has used the words such as *jugigardi*, *ultā-wartārā*, *gilāni*, *bhristi*, *agiān-gubārā*, etc. etc. These words are the indicators of special situation. The thing known as *Dharma* (religion) had departed from knowledge and there was a deep slumber of ignorance everywhere. It is an accepted view by all about Buddhist tradition, that it provided a religious consciousness and challenged a special kind of static state which had dawned upon religion in this land of spiritualism. To that extent the respectable position of the Buddhist thought is still there in this perspective. But inspite of all this consciousness, the type of personality which was cultivated by Buddhism preferred renunciation and asceticism to dynamism. This primacy of the renunciation provided a timely upliftment to the static state of religious thought but it was unable to create a dynamic and permanent perspective. This view gets support from the observations made by Bhai Gurdas. Bhai Gurdas accepts Mahatma Buddha as an incarnation of the dark period which he has termed as *Kaliyuga*. In spite of the fact that Mahatma Buddha is the claimant of illuminating the minds of the people darkened with ignorance, he was not completely successful in removing that darkness. The factors responsible for this, explained by Bhai Gurdas are idolatory, worship of the graves, the belief in magical powers and the shops related with different types of religious cults. Bhai Gurdas concludes that "Buddhism" also is unable to come out of the limitations of "Superflousness" in its total impact. So the resultant state has been accepted that of "*Bharam Bhulāvai*" i.e. absorption into superstitions.

As far as the Vedic religion, which has been termed as Hinduism, is concerned the state of affairs was in a very bad shape. The theory of *Varna-Ashram Dharma*, the division of society and human life into different sections and stages is considered the central axle of Hinduism. Though, in theory, the Hinduism is a one single religion, yet in practice it divided the society into four different sections and prescribed different religious practices for each of them and then divided the human life span into four successive stages assigning different religious duties and practices for each stage. With this sort of basis for social stratification, the Hinduism created an atmosphere of

mutual hatred and tension in the society. With the passing of time, the caste-system became so rigid and complicated that it provided a basis for the exploitation of man by man and a threat to the human values. The stress on *vānprast* and *sanyās ashramas* for the individual salvation gave birth to seclusion and ascetism. Naturally, woman and social life both were considered as hindrance on the path of salvation or *Mukti*. So the deterioration in the status of woman and negligence of the society on the whole was the logical result of this religious thought. As we know and as had been mentioned by Bhai Gurdas in the first *Var*, the different six systems of thought came into existence with the interpretation of the four *Vedas* by the seers like Gautma, Jaimini, Vyasa, Kapila, Kanada and Patanjali. With all these philosophical schools and their offshoots, the Hindu religion was divided and sub-divided into many cults and creeds, as observed by Bhai Gurdas also, *sanyasis* in ten, *Yogies* in twelve, the *Jainas* (*srevarhe*) and *digambars* had their own cults. They were not only divided but all of them have been fighting continuously among themselves. The *Brahmins* being the uppermost caste, had a tight grip on the society and they were busy in instituting the futile discussion among the *Vedas* and *Purānās*. With this, increased the sense of rivalry only and also all types of superficial elements and superstitions entered into Hinduism. The resultant situation was the same as mentioned above, of superstitions, magics, and superficial traditions which misguided the man.

Another important religion was Islam which came with the invaders, and had firmly rooted into the Indian soil till that period. Naturally being the religion of the invaders, it developed a sense of rivalry with other religions in India. Islam was the religion of the rulers, so the Muhammadans had started building the mosques while demolishing the temples. They started forcible conversion of the masses to Islam and were troubling them in many ways. This forcible conversion gave birth to the sense of hatred. It is why that Islam was called the religion of the *malechhas* on the one side and on the other side, they called the non-Muhammadans as *Kafirs*. The state of affairs in the Hazrat Muhammad's religion in India was similar to that of the Hinduism. There had developed so many cults and creeds in this religion also. Because of this there was

religious rivalry everywhere. As in the case of Hinduism, similarly ritualism had entered into the Islam also and it became limited to the *rozās* (fasting), the *nimāzs* (prayers) and the *ids* (religious festivals) only and was deviating from the spiritual essence. The Muhanmadan rulers intoxicated with power, had fallen from religion to such an extent that they were jealous of each other and were fighting among themselves. So in this way, they became indiscreet towards religion and were trying to finish each other. As a result there was a state of transgression in India.

So when Guru Nanak arrived in this world, the Hinduism, the Buddhism, and the Islam were in a perverted condition and all were caught into the grip of superstitions and doubts. There was a growing jealousy and rift among their different branches and cults as for example, in Hinduism in the four *Varnas* and the different cults and creeds, and in Islam among the *Shiās*, *Sunnis*, *Rafzis* and *Imam-Shafis* etc. On the other hand there was a continuous shoving in the Hinduism and the Islam. The *Ganga* and *Banaras* were poise and sacred to the Hindus and *Tilk* (saffron mark on the forehead) and the *Janjū* (a string worn around the neck especially by the *Brahmins*) were very dear to them. Similarly the Mecca and the Kaaba were the most respected places of pilgrimages for the Muhammadans; and the rite of circumcision was compulsory for them. The *Ganga* and *Banaras*, the *tilk* and the *Janjū*, the *Mecca*, the *Kaaba* and the circussicision all these are the external symbols and religious performances in whose superstitious observations there was a danger of departure from the actual spirit of the religion and this danger always remains there in any religion. *Ram* is a means to attain God for the Hindus and *Rahim* is equal to the Name of God (*Khudā*) for the Muhanmadans. But at that period these religious means, as mentioned above, instead of being a guide to direct its followers on the spiritual path of religion, due to the ignorance became the means of departure from the true spirit of religion and misguided the people towards the way of superstitions. The followers of both these paths, forgetting the teachings of the *Vedas* and *Quran*, were following the way of the Satan in worldly greed. In this way knowledge (*giān*) and truth (*sachī*) were set aside. The *Pandīs* and *maulvis* who were supposed to be the guides on the religious path, were busy in fighting among

themselves. Due to all this, the way to salvation or emancipation was not traceable.

According to Bhai Gurdas the status of the *Vedas*, which are the representative of the four ages (the *Yugas*) is like the gathering of the different representatives (*Panchāyī Ikāth*) but they are not the form of truth and the source of all Truth. The *Vedas* are considered as revealed knowledge because of their source. In other words God being the source of their origin they are considered revealed. That way God Himself is the Writer, the Medium and He Himself is Manifested in that knowledge. This truth can be realized only through the Guru. In the absence of the Guru, the sin swallows the world. The prominent feature of the sin is that man leaves the virtue of compassion and this is a fall of man. When this perversion becomes a burden on the earth, then only some saint-soul can free the world of this load. Bhai Gurdas avers that he is unable to find any such saint-soul at the period, of which he is talking. He concludes that the whole universe was crying for help in pain and anguish. He has explained this situation with the traditional Indian mythical simile of the bull and the earth. While discussing the back-ground of Guru Nanak's arrival in this world, Bhai Gurdas tries to bring forth the factor that religion had broken away from knowledge (*giān*) and became dependent upon external symbols and rituals. Due to this departure of religion from knowledge and spiritual essence there arose the situation of suffering, in which sin dominated. To reunite the religion with knowledge, to illumine the minds of the people with the spiritual light, Guru Nanak was born in this world. He united the world with the light of the true Name (*satī Nām*). Thus, Guru Nanak came into the *Kaliyug*, (The dark period) to emancipate the world. This faith has been expressed by Bhai Gurdas in his *Vārs* (ballads).

We find many references to this effect, as analysed by Bhai Gurdas in the *Bāṇī of Guru Granth Sahib* also. Guru Nanak has termed the *Kaliyug* (the dark period), a knife and the kings and the rulers as butchers. The righteousness (*Dharma*) is flown on wings. Everywhere evil and falsehood is dominating. Guru Nanak has termed this period as a night of utter darkness in which the moon of truth is nowhere visible, nor risen anywhere. There does not seem any ray of hope, any path of

emancipation. The humanity is involved in egoism and wails in suffering. Then how to come out of this dark situation? It is further mentioned by Guru Nanak about that period saying that in this age of *Kaliyuga* mankind has turned dog-like and its food is carrion. It barks out falsehood and the righteous (*Dharma*) thinking is gone. Those that in life, have no faith their repute is foul on death also. When religion becomes mere formalism, it generates a certain type of egoism and religious egoism is more dangerous than any other type of egoism. Along with this, when religion is reduced to mere formalism and leaves the spiritual essence far behind it gives rise to systematic selfishness. It was the actual state of affairs practically in the field of religion at that time. All the religious traditions prevalent in India were indulged in such practices. In *Asa Di Var* Guru Nanak throws light upon such religious practices. For example in one *sloka*, while talking about the worshippers of Krishna, Guru Nanak says that the disciples play on instruments to the tune of which the teachers dance. They move their feet and sway their heads in rhythms. The dust upthrown by their dancing feet blows into their hair. The people watching the fun go away laughing to their homes. They are laughing because they know that it is only to earn their bread that the teacher and the disciples stage their shows. So instead of creating the feelings of holiness and spirituality in the minds of the spectators, their performances just make them laugh. He further remarks about the followers of different faiths. For example the Muslims are enamoured of their *Shariat* code which they study deeply and contemplate on it. However, God's true devotees are those who, to have sight of Him, put restraints upon themselves. Hindus laud God and according to the *shastras* describe Him as of endless aspect, yet they bathe at places of pilgrimage and worship Him through rituals such as burning aloe fragrance and making offerings to idols. Similarly the Yogis who consider themselves as men of special excellence meditate on the Creator with the name *Allakh* (Innaccessible, Absolute Void, *Param sunya*). He who is of subtle aspect, whose Name is the Immaculate, they (the yogis) contemperate Him in the embodied form. The mind of the munificents is filled with content at the thought of giving away charities. But as they give they seek from God a thousand fold reward for their

benefactions and still the world praise them.

The main religious tradition of India at time was Hinduism or we can say the Vedic religion. In this religion *Brahmin* is authorized to guide the people in religious matters. How all this had taken to formality is depicted by Guru Nanak. He says that the hypocritical *Brahmin* priest recites scriptures and says his *sandhya* prayers as a matter of empty formality. He worships his idols and like the heron is absorbed in the false meditational pose. In spite of his religious posture lies lie in his mouth like spurious ornaments of iron instead of gold. He is mindful of reciting *Gayatri* thrice a day. He wears a rosary around his neck and draws the paste-mark on his forehead. As sanctioned to him religiously he keeps two *dhotis* with him and during prayers puts on the washed, wet piece of cloth on his shoulders. Similar is the case with Jainas who leaving the spiritual essence of religion aside are lost in mere formalism. It is observed that they pluck their head-hair and drink foul water, beg and eat other's leavings. They are scared of water, scatter their ordure and inhale its foul smell. Their head are plucked like sheep and hands smeared with ashes. They lay waste their parents's earnings and their families are piteously wailing around them. After death neither flour-pies nor food-offerings on leaves are dedicated to them. Neither eleventh day obsequies nor lamp-lighting is performed. They do not find any prop at sixty-eight bathing-spots and *Brahmins* do not accept their food offerings. Day and night they are covered with filth and their foreheads without the paste-mark. They always sit in a cluster like mourners, not attending the religious assemblies. They march in a single file begging bowls to their waists and dangling tassels. They are neither *Yogis* nor *Jangams*, nor are they Mohammadans. Corrupted the whole herd of them, cursed of God, they wander about as lost. Religion had been reduced just to the performance of rituals, ceremonies and formalities without reaching and receiving the spiritual ideals underlying that religion. Among many examples cited by Guru Nanak we may take just one to throw light upon the prevalent situation. To highlight the futility of these rituals Guru Nanak says that a piece of thread is bought for four cowries, and is put on, seated in the four cornored eating place in the home venerated with cowdung. Then the *Brahmin* priest presiding over this

ceremony whispers some *mantras* into the ears of the wearer which being in Sanskrit are unintelligible to the boy. In this way the *Brahmin* who may himself be an ignorant man, becomes his preceptor. When the wearer dies, such a thread will drop off and he departs to the next world without the thread. It is further told by Guru Nanak that man is guilty of immeasurable acts of evil and lechery, falsehood and abusive language. He is guilty of immeasurable acts of deceit, of evils done in secret that cling to the self day and night. The sacred thread of cotton is spun that is twisted by the *Brahmin*. They slaughter a goat to celebrate the event and then all ask him to put it on the neophyte. When worn out it is thrown away. If this thread had the power in it, it would not snap at all. The *Brahmin* put the thread on others but he does not throw the sacred thread on his passions and lust for woman. Each morning his face is covered with shame. His feet and hands, tongue and eyes are not restrained by the thread. He moves along unrestrained by the thread. He invests others with the thread through twisting yarn. He solemnizes weddings on hire and consulting astrological tables directs the auspicious path of journeys. The Guru asks the world to listen to this wonder that this man blind in mind is called the wise.

Bhagat Kabir beautifully brings out the hypocrisy and fanaticism depicted by the religious leaders of the time. In spite of the fact that the *Kazi* performs all sort of religious rituals, is not true to the spirit of the religion. He does not understand the essence of the religion. For example a *Kazi* observes fasts (*rozās*) and propitiate *Allāh*, yet for the pleasure of his tongue slaughters the living creatures. The *Kazi* is mindful of his own ego only, not of anybody else. Why engage in worthless pursuits? Bhagat Kabir avers that One and Sole is the Lord of all who is manifest in the *Kazi* also but the *Kazi* does not see Him by contemplation. Being fanatic after faith the *Kazi* does not realize it. Because of this, his life goes waste without serving any purpose. The *Quran* declares truly that *Allāh* is True and Holy. He is neither woman nor man. But he (the *Kazi*) does not study and contemplate this and because of this reason his mind remains unenlightened. *Allāh* who is Invisible and Pervasive in all beings should be realized in the heart. So, Kabir says that in Hindu and Muslim abides

One Sole God. From this it is very much clear that the Muslim religious leaders were biased about the Hindu population. *Kazis* were the deciding factor in religious as well as many other matters. So, many times they were a party to the atrocities imposed upon the Hindu population by the Muslim rulers. Guru Nanak Dev observes in the same context that if blood stained the cloth is reckoned impure, then how the minds of such be deemed pure who suck the blood of others? With a pure heart and tongue utter the Name of God (*Khudā*), all else is worldly show, and false deeds. The *Kazi*, the *Brahmin* and the *Yogi* are the three religious leaders of the main three traditions who are responsible to lead the people on spiritual path but all three of them are themselves not true to their profession at that time. As the Guru says, the body is the paper and mind's tendencies the Divine decree recorded on it, man in his ignorance does not read the writ recorded on his head. The undermentioned three decrees are writ at the Divine court. One should understand that the base coin is of little use. If it contains genuine silver then all will pronounce it genuine. The *Kazi* (the Muslim Judge) utters falsehood and eats filth meaning thereby that he is getting illegal gratification. The *Brahmin*, who is guilty of slaughtering the humanity, goes to the pilgrimages and makes show of poise bathing. The *Yogi*, blind of insight, does not know the true praxis. The devices of all these three categories of religious leaders ruin mankind. At another place Guru Nanak talks of egoism related with education and religious ritualism and formalities. It seems that here learning and writing is talked about in the context of religion where a man learned in religious knowledge, instead of doing good to others becomes egoistic because of his knowledge and this was the prevalent attitude. The more a man writes and acquires learning, the more he is overcome by anxiety and after wandering much over bathing-spots he chatters all the more. He only torments his body by assuming numerous sectarian guises. He who abjurs clothing is full of wrath day and night, How may one wake from his ignorance if lost in stubborn silence? He is as asleep without the Guru's guidance. Going barefoot he undergoes the consequences of his own doings. He brings ignominy by consuming filthy substances and he, being a stupid fool has forfeited his respect. This is the picture of

religious people.

Social And Cultural Situation : When a society deteriorates, one can judge this deterioration in every aspect of society i. e. religious, social, cultural and political as well. As mentioned earlier, socially the society was divided not only in the four main castes i. e. *Brahmins*, *Khatris*, *Valshs* and *Shudras* but in many more sub castes. There was discrimination on the basis of birth in a particular caste. The *shudras* were in a very bad position. They were deprived of basic living rights and were not allowed to live like human beings. They were exploited by the upper classes on all levels. This was the one aspect of the deteriorated social situation. As we know, the Islam was the religion of the rulers and most of the subject was a Hindu one. Many of the officials were from the Hindu population. The cultural situation became so perverted that on the one side the Hindu officials levy tax on the *Brahmin* having a cow to please the Muslim rulers and on the other hand, consider the cow-dung as poise and plaster their kitchen with it as if cow-dung is the means of salvation. These Hindu officials keeping to their *dhori*, the sacred mark on their foreheads and their rosary, obtain the cereals, the food they eat from those Muslim rulers, whom they call *malechhas*, the unclean, behind their back. In their homes, they worship according to the Hindu way but outside they read the Muslim scriptures and adopt their ways and style. It was all hypocrisy. Those who gorge on human beings perform *namaz*. Those who are wielding the butcher's knife on the masses wear the sacred thread around the neck. The *Brahmins* who perform religious ceremonies in their homes, they too, share the same tastes of sin from their food, that is of oppressing the poor masses. As a result of the double standards, their wealth is unworthy and their dealings with other people are unworthy and they obtain their livelihood through falsehood. The abode of modesty and righteousness is far-away from them and falsehood is pervasive everywhere. They have become so shameless and vicious that though butchers at large, brandishing knife in their hands, yet they put on the sacred mark on their forehead and assume the *dhori* with end stuck-up. To get the approval of the Muslim rulers they wear the blue-clothes. On the one hand, they accept food from the Muslims, whom they call *malechhas* and on the other hand recite and worship the *Purānas* with that money. On the one hand,

they eat the goat slaughtered to the accompaniment of Muslim religious texts uttered in a foreign tongue. On the other hand, they would not allow anyone to step into their kitchen. Then, having prepared their eating place plastered with cow-dung, a line is drawn around it. And the so-called religious man, full of falsehood sits in it and warn others not to pollute the place by approaching it because that will pollute his food. That way, those men with sinful bodies practise hypocrisy, act perversely. Their minds are unclean but they cleanse their mouths. This cultural perversion and conflict had shattered the whole social and ethical values. The mutual trust had gone, skepticism and doubt became the part of religiosity.

Second to the *Brahmins* in social, cultural and religious lineage were *Khatri*s (*Kashatryas*), upon whom was the moral duty to protect the society from inner and outer dangers to save their religion and culture. According to Guru Nanak, they had given up their moral duty and to please the Muslim rulers have taken to their language. It is a cultural perversion to show hatred for ones own language and adopt the language of the rulers to please them. One more example may be cited to indicate this cultural fall. It is told that, because the *shekhs* (Muslim leaders) are dominating so, now the Primal Lord (*Brahman*) is called by the Name *Allāh* (The name by which the Muhammadans address God). The current situation is such that the *Shekhs* are levying taxes on temples and deities. The Hindu way of religion has taken to the Muslim way of religion. The ablution pitcher, the prayer, the prayer-mat, the call to prayer, all have assumed the Muslim garb. Even the Lord now is figured as wearing blue. In each home, each one is addressed as *miān*. People are assuming the Muhammadan mannerism and have adopted their language. Another aspect of cultural perversion was the plight of the woman. Her condition was worse than a slave even. The dignity and self-respect of woman was always in danger. This was not the plight of Hindu woman only being the member of the ruled class, it was same with the Muslim woman. We can have a look into it when Babar plundered India. He himself was a Muslim. As avered by Guru Nanak, Babar with the wedding party of sin rushed down from Kabul and forcibly demanded the surrender of Indian womanhood. He did not care for the *Kazis* or *Brahmins*, Satan went about

solemnizing the marriages. Muslim woman reciting the *Quran*, called on *Khuda* in their affliction. Other women of lower castes and the Hindus were also included in it. The paeans of blood are sung as wedding songs and the wedded ones are anointed with blood, nor with saffron.

Guru Nanak has further explained the conduct of the rulers and their officials which depict the deteriorated political situation. Generally, the rulers and their educated officials are there to protect the subject and look after their well-being. But here the situation is quite opposite. The Guru cites the examples of the deer, the hawks and the courtiers which are considered most clever and learned but they become the cause of the trapping of their own companions. They exploit their own people. In *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* the rulers of the period have been termed as lions and their courtiers as dogs who together hunt the people and suck their blood. The subjects are blind of mind and in their ignorance are like corpses stuffed with straw, so they have been bearing every type of rascality. Such a situation was the limit of idiocy which was bearing every type of repression and people were taking worldly dexterity and mischief as wisdom. By benefitting from the worldly position man was exploiting man and this exploitation and repression was being tolerated quietly, without any questioning, considering it the fruit of his previous actions, as a wrath of God. Guru Nanak was so moved by the total plight and situation that he even complained to God that if a powerful foe molest one equally powerfull, the mind would not grieve. But when a ferocious tiger falls upon a herd of kine, then the master must be called to account.

II

These were the conditions when Sikh revelation took place. The idea of revelation in Sikhism is very unique one. The Guru does not claim himself to be the incarnation of God. The Guru had the direct experience of Truth and then expressed this experience in the form of language. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* contains this mystic experience of the Guru in the form of the *Bāni*. It is the expression of the Divine Truth. So Sikh revelation is in the form of the *Bāni*. We find many references to this effect

in *Bāni* itself. In the *Janam Sakhis* we find the story of the rivulet *Vein*. We are told how Guru Nanak was rapt in meditation for three days and had ascended to the plane of truth and appeared before the Supreme Lord. Now, on the third day when after this experience of truth he comes out of the river, he declared his first article of faith, "there is no Hindu and no Muslim." The deeper meaning of this first article of faith is that man can not be spiritually divided on the basis of religion. There is the spiritual unity in man. Sikh revelation is a continual process from the first Guru, Nanak Dev to the tenth and last Guru, Gobind Singh. *Japuji Sahib* is the first revelation in which the ideal to be achieved by man and how to achieve it, has been clearly stressed.

In the very beginning of the *Japuji* the basic question placed before man is "How then to be '*Sachiar*', to be true? How to remove the veil of untruthfulness?" To be "*Sachīār*", to be true, the self-realization has been placed as the highest moral standard before man in Sikhism. According to Guru Nanak "*Kūrai Pāli*" is *haumai*, the sense of I-ness, a feeling of individuation which is the indication of narrow or limited point of view. Every man in his worldly existence is possessed by this sense of I-ness. To realize his self man has to remove this veil of ignorance. The answer to the question "how to achieve it" follows "His Will, inborn in us, thou follow. (Thus is truth attained)". The self is to realize His "*Hukam*" which is inborn in us, which is internal to itself. But at the same time, it is not subjective will, it is universal in nature and transcends all subjectivities. The journey of the self towards realization is described in the five Khands i.e. *dharam khand*, *gīān khand*, *saram knand*, *karam khand* and *sach khand*. *Dharam khand* is the first stage towards this progress in which man performs his socially determined duties and at the same time it is the first step towards knowledge where man has the ordinary experience of nature. The second stage of progress is *giānkhand*, the stage of the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. The seeker seeks more and more of God's creation in all its wonderful variety. The third stage of *saramkhand*, is the stage of the attainment of emotional harmony and unity of the self and also it is related with the aesthetic realization of the self. The seeker withdraws himself into his innermind in order

to reflect on what has been given by knowledge. Actually all these stages are interrelated and one stage leads to the other stage. *Gharhiai* is the key word in this stage, "*Gharhiai surat mat man budh*" meaning thereby that at this stage the consciousness, cognitive insight, mind and intellect are transformed. This is the unique contribution of Sikhism that effort has been placed at the third stage. The fourth stage is that of *Karam Khand* which evolves naturally. At this stage the actions are close to all comprehensiveness and self is full of spiritual energy and strength, and the faith is in tune with the effort. At this stage the self rises above the sense of I-ness, egoism, of individuation (*haumai*) and he continues performing his social and moral duties. In Sikhism man is not cut off from society to achieve spiritual ends. He very much remains the social being. He takes up the service of man-kind as a spiritual warrior as Guru Arjan Dev says, that the God-enlightened are inspired in doing good to others. The first four stages culminates in the fifth stage of *Sach-Khand*. It is the level of divine knowledge. It is revelatory one. Here the consciousness of the self reaches at such a point where he achieves the universal point of view, the universal aesthetic communion. In it is the whole world, the universe and the spheres, of which no limit, no count can be made. It is the realization of the Divine Will, Divine Order which is working behind the whole creation. It is within, not without. The within must be fused with without. Here action, consciousness and bliss goes side by side. This is the stage of *Sachtāra*, the highest good, which is ever aspired by man. Here, the seeker is a complete person because he seeks good spontaneously. He surrenders his will to the Supreme Will and works according to the Divine will.

We know that the moral journey on this path of self-realization is not very easy task. It is very difficult and needs total submission. There are various passions, evil propensities, impulses and so many other attractions which try to detrack the self from its path. The Gurus have termed these evil propensities and sources of actions as "*Panchchor*" (the five thieves or burglars). They are named as *Kām*, *Kroadh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankār* (concupiscence, anger, avarice, attachment and pride). According to the Guru, to proceed smoothly towards the

journey of self-realization these evil propensities must be harnessed and regulated towards the goal. But one thing should be very much clear that the Gurus do not approve of their suppression through renunciation, asceticism, austerities, fastings or anything like that. Because it is not only difficult but impossible to suppress them. So they are to be regulated and sublimated towards the ideal. According to the Guru it is necessary for the seeker to substitute virtues to *Kām*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankār* to proceed smoothly for the realization of the ultimate goal. Because these five propensities are the sources of actions also, so the virtue-based actions will be morally good. The virtues which the seeker should cultivate in himself, according to *Gurmat* are wisdom (*siāṇap*), truthfulness (*Sati*, veracity), Justice (*nīaon*), temperance (*sanjam*), courage (fertility as well as valour), humility (*halimi*), contentment (*santokh*), compassion (*dayā*). Through the cultivation of these virtues, these evil propensities can be regulated in the right direction. While rising above these and cultivating virtues the seeker can realize the higher values of life himself. This is the real *rahit* part according to Sikhism. Time and again the Guru reminds of this, as for example in *Japuji*, talking in the terms of a *Yogi* he says that contentment be the earrings, modesty be the begging bowl and pouch and contemplation be the ashes a *Yogi* smears on the body. He further asks to make the quilt from the realization of his morality and to keep the body virgin. Faith in God be the code and staff and all the mankind be the sect of a *Yogi*. This is the way to conquer oneself and complete spiritual fulfillment; transcendence from all desires and human frailty.

In Sikhism the efforts to be done for the self-realization are not isolated ones. As already pointed out, asceticism and quietism are not approved of. Man is to cultivate virtues in himself through the guidance of the Guru and for that matter *sangat* or congregation of the holy people is the best place for the self-realization. There is no aspect of life which has been left unexplored by the Guru. Guru Nanak himself puts the question what are the qualities the holy company has and then answers that it is such where the sole Name of the Lord is expounded. The sole Name is the Divine Ordinance (*Hukam*)

and the realization of which has been granted by the preceptor. So *Hukam* is the objective and highest value which is to be realized in the *sangat* through the grace of the Guru. Moreover, in Sikhism, the seeker treads on the path of self-realization not only himself but help others also to move on this path. He is to remain ever active. He is to share the social responsibilities for the up-liftment of others also. According to Sikhism all beings spring from the same Spiritual Source, so all share the same spirituality. So all are equal. There is no distinction of race, colour, caste or birth. This sense of fellow-beingness demands the acceptance of society as a spiritual unity. So logically, it follows that the seeker should live in the society and fulfill his duties towards it and should not run away from the social life. The seeker is to discover the values himself and the source of the values is the ideal itself i.e. the Supreme Being, the Supreme Entity, the *Param Sati*, which is called God. He is the ground of all values, as well as the ground of the self. As avered by Guru Amardas, "the self is the image of the Divine Light and he is to realize his own origin because only through the realization of the origin is realized God." As mentioned earlier, man is to proceed towards the realization with humility, giving up all the sense of individuation (*haumai*), he is to abide in *razā* because according to *Gurmat*, *Hukam* and *haumai* are contradictory to each other.

The Absolute or *Param Sat* in Sikhism is viewed as the One Universal Being i.e. Existent, the Real, the Spirit (consciousness). He is Creative, Entity which means He is viewed as dynamic and functional. He is Controller as well as Enjoyer, Beyond Restraint, the Spontaneous, beyond any internal antagonisms, the Harmonious, He is timeless, the Manifest. Yet He does not come into birth and death. He is self-existent, He can be realized through the Guru's grace. These are the attributes of the Absolute. The real and the *sachiāra* is one who is the realized self, who has realized the attributes of his source, the Supreme Reality, and the Guru is the guide who directs on this path and the person who is seeking this path is termed as a *Sikh*, a seeker. In Sikhism the Guru is the Word, the *Bāṇi*, the *Shabad*. So the ideal placed before the seeker in Sikhism is to be like the Absolute, God, because according to Sikhism the

type of God we worship will give us the type of life we live. At the same time the seeker is to create such conditions in which he can evolve his personality, because to tread on the path of self-realization means to transform, to evolve one's personality. So the seeker is also viewed to remain ever active in the society. The third Guru Amardas describes the state of realized-self as, "Age can never effect the God-directed men in whose selves the God-consciousness and realization is lodged. They contemplate the Divine merits for all-times and inside them is lodged serene meditation. They ever abide in bliss and wisdom and to them joy and sorrow are the same. They see the Divine Being pervasive in the whole creation."

The realized self is termed as *Sachiār, Gurmukhi, Brahmgiāni* etc. etc. in Sikhism; The empirical existence and spiritual essence are to be harmonized and empirical aspect is as important as the spiritual aspect because empirical existence of man is the occasion provided to him by God for self-realization. Because the Source of origination is the same Primal Being, Spiritual Light, so all have equal right to the journey on spiritual path. No body is barred from this experience due to his caste, colour, birth, race or sex. All are spiritually one. The result of this progress is that the total out-look towards life is changed, it is broadened. The *haumai* or sense of individuation is transformed into the sense of common brotherhood, into the sense of belongingness. Any type of limited view or narrow-mindedness is not allowed in the *Bāni*.

Now the practical view of this value system was provided by the Guru in the Sikh way of life in which the three important aspects are, to earn one's livelihood through one's own honest efforts (*Kīrt Karnā*), to share your earnings with the needy people (*Vand chhakṇā*) and to ever remember the holy Name (*Nām Japaṇā*) These are the three main principles on which the Sikh way of life is based. This whole ideology practically brought about a notable change in the large section of the society. It is practically evident in the Sikh institutions e.g. in the Sikh *Gurdwaras* there are no restrictions to entry, all are welcomed there. Then the institution of *langar* i.e. *sangat* and *pangat*. All can serve without distinction and all are equally served with food. All are to sit in the same *pangat* to have food. Similarly

woman has the equal right to spiritual realization. Not only this, historically she proved her worth with her counterpart from every angle, even in the battle field. In Sikh religion the woman is made conscious of her dignity as a human being. She is forbidden to perform the ritual of self-immolation on the funeral-pyre of her husband which was a common custom with the Indian society especially with the Hindu woman. As referred to by Bhai Gurdas, that in the age of *Kaliyug* (the dark period) Guru Nanak showed the Reality, the Transcendent God as One and at the same time he established the spiritual unity of man and all the different four sections of the society were merged into one. The emergence of the *Khalsa* was the out-come of this transformation of the human personality which was able to protect and defend the freedom, dignity and honour of man from inner and outer dangers. Man was taught to be true to his faith and respect other's faiths. The sacrifices of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur are the greatest examples to tell that one can lay down even one's life for the dignity of man and for the freedom of faith of others. We can not find another example of religious scripture than *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* in which the respect and place has been granted to the other's faiths. The inclusion of the compositions of Baba Farid, who was a follower of Islam and other *Bhagats* most of whom belonged to *Vaishnava* cult is a great example. Guru Nanak went to the important places of other religions and opened a dialogue with the leaders of other religions. He convinced them through reason and logic. The new society was to be composed of realized selves, which are termed as *Giani*, *Brahamgiani*, *Gurmukh* and *Sachtar* in Sikhism. As already mentioned the realized self is described by Guru Teg Bahadur as one, who is unshaken by joy and suffering, avarice, attachment and egoism, is the image of the Lord. He is indifferent to praise and dispraise; gold and iron are alike to him and because of this he is truly liberated person. To a truly liberated person joy and sorrow are one and same, he holds foe and friend alike. He does not strike terror in others and is not afraid of any one. This self-realization transformed these down trodden, ignorant, terrorized people into a strong society who could defend dignity, honour and freedom of humanity. This was not less than a miracle.

III

Key note address was delivered orally by late Dr. Avtar Singh, Dean academic affairs, Dean faculty of humanities and religious studies, Prof. & Head, department of Philosophy, Punjabi University, Patiala. Here I would like to give the summary of the notes taken by me as I understood it. Dr. Avtar Singh said that he wanted to present his views to the audience in order to focus their attention on the point that what is the context of change in Sikh religion? It is the dilemma of our age that every change is envisaged as evolutionary (progressive). Perhaps the need is to sort out what is the basic issue? If the social change becomes progressive (evolutionary) then, he said, he should be very thankful. If we are to think about or even to talk about the context of structure of Sikh values, we have to see what is the inner structure and what is the outer structure of the Sikh values. By and large what is the value? Value always indicates the normative order. He said that he would not talk about the *isness* of the values, he would talk about the *oughtness* of the values i.e. what the values ought to be. Values are the illogical options for man. There are two types of values in any society.

- I. Those values which are performed in the context of the duty.
- II. Those values which help man to realize the destination of life in the form of an ideal.

If we consider the values as an ideal, then possibly we could be able to view the life in a special context. As we generalise then we come to know that it is not ontology which is dominating, rather the prejudices are dominating. If we look into what is the inner structure of Sikh values then we can say that it can be divided into four parts.

1. Non-partisan inner structure: Partisan structure has the relational basis. To elaborate the non-partisan aspect of the structure of Sikh values we can quote the example of Bhai Ghanaya as a symbol of non-partisan structure, from Sikh history when he is serving water equally to both friend and foe, in the battle field to the wounded soldiers.

2. There is a hierarchy in Sikh values. Simultaneously they are in the ascending order. There is the non-assimilative dialectical hierarchy. There is a great contribution of India in this field and Sikh value-system has a special contribution. In Sikh value-system values are applicable in this form.
3. Values are determined in the context of the place of an individual's personal life. Concrete individual values have got their own special context.
4. What is *Razā* ? and what is *Hukam* ? The secret of *Razā* and *Hukam* in the Sikh value system in the context of mystical and social lies in the fact that one fulfills one's duties and evaluates one's role. This evaluation is done in the context of that Supreme Ideal.

In the context of India it is an open evaluation. It was an ontological approach that in Indian thought it is told that one should abandon the action because the action binds. It was the Sikh religion who told that all the values are not binding. It was said for the first time that if you do them in your life in the context of *Hukam* and *Raza*, they are non-binding. The theory of *Karma* was interpreted in the totally new way which influenced the Sikh psyche. The total value realization does not bind. Value-oriented activity does not bind. For this matter, final emancipation is not related with any one action. This is a great transformation (revolution) in the context of values.

Then there is the economic aspect of the values. In Sikh religion economic value is related with social and spiritual both. In Sikhism economic activity is determined according to the value. This world is an opportunity and this opportunity should not be misused with any body. This is a continual process of introspection. This is the continual state of living "Devotion to Lord is to taste the thirty-six kinds of delicacies. But these are attained by the Divine Grace. Friend, to taste other than these is to ruin bliss. For they fill the mind with foul thinking and produce torment to the body. (S.G.G.S., P. 16)" One should not live on the exploitation of the others. Sikhism places us again in the position of a householder. Evolution is not the survival of the fittest, it is a mutual aid and co-operation. Sikhism rejects the theory of the survival of the fittest. Production is necessary but

the structure of the work (*Kirat*) is necessary for the whole of the world. It is declared by Guru Nanak "He alone, O Nanak, knows the way, who earns with the sweat of his brow and then shares it with others. (S.G.G.S., p. 1245)" Then there are the social values. We can look into it from two aspects. One is its political context and the other is its non-political context. Sometimes the social context becomes dim. In Sikh religion there is mutual aid and co-operation in all institutions. This is not one part of life to locate the social hygiene and oblige it. It has many dimensions and depths. It is not limited to one span. It is a continuous engagement. Then there is the politico-social context. There arises the question: Are religion and politics separate from each other? The whole world is looking towards India from the view that it is the source of non-destructive ethics. Religious orientation inspires man towards the higher spiritual ends.

In Sikhism self realization is the moral ideal for man to be achieved. Those actions are good for man which help him in the way of self-realization and those which become the hinderance in this path are considered bad actions. Self is not only the material being. Materialism makes man to leave the spiritual and inspire him towards the world only. This takes him towards slavery. Moral is the centre which is to determine the praxis and its spiritual context is the Ultimate Reality towards which he is to move.

Dr. Avtar Singh further told that if he talks into the context of social change then it is to be seen how the values have been directed? The question of the Sikh values is that are these values affecting the social change or are they being affected by the social Change? In Sikhism they are affecting the social change. He told the audience that he had been abroad many times in different countries and had a chance to see the Sikh identity. They are sustaining their values in those countries. It is not just the effect of material. If they are sustaining their religious and spiritual values in the changed social environment, it means the values and the Sikhs are not being influenced by the social change. Consciously in the Sikh institutions, the structure of the three kinds of values is determined symbolically on personal level:—

1. *Jodh Mahān Bal Sūr* (courage):—First is courage. Every

freedom seeking activity is based on courage. Sikhism build a new value-structure based on courage. Least resistance is not the characteristic of human-world. In Sikhism there is a continuous effort towards freedom. Perhaps continuous expansion may not be individualistic. The learned (*Giāni*) is free from fear, "He who frightens no one nor is afraid of anyone. He alone is wise, O mind, he alone knows his God. (S.G-G.S, P. 1427)" Courage is the source of Supreme values.

2. Justice, (*Nyāon, Tapāvas* Social Values) :—What is right is right and what is wrong is wrong, it will be determined by the social justice, by the fairness. The concept of justice is derived from the Great Ideal, in the terms of spiritual oneness of man i.e. in tems of social equality. When man does justice against himself then he keeps the social justice in his view.
3. What is God Consciousness? What is *Naam* (Name)? "*Naam Ke dhāre sagale jant*," "All beings by the Name are sustained". Here the term implies Divine might. *Naam* is the God-consciousness. *Naam* is the spiritual highest determining value.

Is social evolution inevitable? Is social change inevitable? In the context of Sikh history social change is social evolution. This is continuous evolutionary state. The greater perspective of change is that it should be from within and it is the evolutionary one. The freedom from within is the symbol of the evolution of social change. In the Sikh society people are deeply religious. Impulsive response is not the structure of continuous social change. According to Sikhism the way of social change is very difficult as well as dangerous one. It is the way of total surrender, the way of sacrifice. There are three ways, *Giān Mārg* (the way of knowledge), *Bhagati Mārg* (the way of meditation), and *Karam Mārg* (the way of action). From Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru, to Guru Arjan Dev the fifth Guru, nothing could be better than the scripture. This is the way of knowledge. On the way of meditation, who can have it more than the ninth Guru Teg Bahadur? On the way of action what could have been beyond the tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh? There is the formal lookingness of the way of action. In the context of

the value-system of the world the way of meditation, the way of knowledge and the way of action, all are a sacrifice. This is a continual process of the demand of the values.

IV

The first paper is presented by Dr. Kehar Singh "Sikh Political Values—An Analysis". Dr. Kehar Singh is Prof. and Head in the Department of Political Science, Punjabi University, Patiala. He has recently edited a book "Perspectives of Sikh Polity." and is the author of "Farmers Movement and Pressure Group Politics" and "Sanyukat Raj America da Sawidhan". It is what natural that political science being the area of his specialisation he tries to grapple with the Sikh polity. In the present paper also he has tried to high-light how, in Sikh thought and tradition the development of the total human personality is envisaged. For that matter Sikh thought and tradition both graviates towards the realization of essential spirituality by the individuals and the heroic struggle for the realization of certain cherished human ideals. He has tried to show how spiritual and temporal aspects go side by side in Sikhism and there is no contradiction in the spiritual and temporal ideals in Sikhism. The second paper, named, "Sikh World-View and Social Dynamism", was presented by Dr. Nirbhai Singh. Dr. Nirbhai Singh is presently a Professor In Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies at Punjabi University, Patiala. He has published two books and many research articles. He has a long standing in philosophy and is trying to build Sikh academics in a system. At present he is the editor of "The Journal of Religious Studies". In this paper he has tried to analys the Sikh world-view and how it inspired the social dynamism. While using the interpretive and analytical methodology he has tried to systematize the variant spiritual elements of Sikh faith. Dr. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon is an established scholar of Sikh history. He started his career in Punjab University, Chandigarh and is still working there as head in the Department of History at evening college. He has written a lot and his latest work is, "India Committed Suicide." His present paper is, "Singh Sabha Movement and Social Change." He has published a full book on the social

reform activities of *Singh Sabha* which was based on the tenets of the Sikh faith. He has tried to show how the movement, while eradicating many evils from the Sikh society, tried to build it, as a new social order with distinct social laws, customs and ceremonies for the Sikhs.

The fourth paper is by Dr. T. S. Sodhi, "Sikh perspective of Educational Values and Social Change." Dr. T.S. Sodhi has been teaching in the Department of Education, Punjabi, University, Patiala and got retired recently. He has published many books and research articles in the field of education. His recent work is, "Educational Philosophy of Guru Nanak". In the present paper Dr. T. S. Sodhi highlights that how the education performs the function of aculturation, socialisation and cultivates spiritual, moral, social and ethical values. According to him while visualizing all this, the Sikh Gurus were able to bring about the change in such people who were depressed, living only at animal level without any social, cultural, human and respectable status. There was a total personality transformation through the Guru's teachings and such masses were able to create a new society based on new value system and finish the Mughal Empire which was the cause of tyranny and religious degradation. The next paper is by Dr. Harbans Singh. Basically he belongs to the field of Economics and is working as a senior officer in "Punjab and Sindh Bank" banking service. He has published a book, "Degh Tegh Fateh : Socio Economic & Religio-political Fundamentals of Sikhism". He did his Ph. D. from Punjab University, Chandigarh and inspite of the fact that he is working with the banking service he is in touch with writing continuously. In the present paper he brings to light the essential feature of Sikh thought in its recognition of the importance of worldly pursuits and their reconciliation with higher spiritual values of human life. Through this Sikh thought provided a 'balanced approach' to worldly spiritual pursuits for the realization of the goal of human life. Prof. Gurmukh Singh wrote a paper on "The Gurmat Value Structure and Social Dynamism". He got retired from the service as a principal and has very keen interest in Sikh studies. He has tried to high-light the basis of Sikh values and the socio-spiritual change brought about by this value-system. Then Dr. Sher Singh

Sher, who presented "Sikh-Religio-Spiritual And Sociological Doctrines for Social Change" is a well known personality in the field of Sikh studies. By training he can be termed as a classical Sikh. By approach he is modern. Inspite of all this he is neither entrenched in classicism nor imbued completely in modernism. The references given in his paper included in this book, are evident of his self-study. He contributed a lot towards "Sikhology" in his own terms. It deserves mentioning over here that his study of "Christology" equipped him with Christian ideom which he tries in discussing the Sikh ethos, e.g. the word theology used in the paper referred above can be taken as a proof of it. I would like to mention here that keeping in view the length of the paper and scheme of the book, I have to edit his paper. The next article, "Essential Postulates of Sikhism and Their Sociological Significance," is by Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia. Dr. Ahluwalia basically belongs to literature. Philosophy, he seems to apprehend through the study of Marxism. Poet and critic in Ahluwalia is recognized in the men of letters in Punjabi world. He has also contributed towards the study of Sikhism. His paper included in this book is, in fact, "Guru Nanak Commemorative lecture", delivered by him in the department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies. In his writings, he tries to bring forward the futuristic perspective of Sikhism. The next article, "Sikh Values in a Dialogical perspective", has been written by Dr. Balkar Singh. Dr. Singh is a professor and head of the department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies. He did his Ph. D. on "Sikh Myiticism", under the guidance of late Dr. Avtar Singh. According to me, he belongs to that school of studies in Sikhism which was envisaged by late Dr. Avtar Singh. He is regularly contributing to the Sikh studies by his books and research articles. The paper contributed by him is a burning topic of the day in the field of religious studies because the whole world comprising of different religions is looking for common religious model for human liberation. Dr. Balkar Singh is of the view that Sikhism is the only religion which can provide the basic tenets for the needed universal religious model. This article is an indication towards this thesis. So these are the articles contributed by the learned scholars in Sikh Studies. In the articles the independent & personnal views are expressed by my senior colleagues. I have not doubted any body's approach

but that is definitely their own. This is not necessary for me or for the University to agree with the views of any author. Scholarship should agree or disagree in general. Academics of any religion should be allowed to flower in multi-dimensional ways. Of course seminars provide an occasion to the scholars to express their ideas independently and at the same time other scholars do express it in the form of questions. This is the real dialogic approach of the *Bāṇī* "Kichhu Suniai Kichhu Kahiai". We have the privilege to present these ideas to the readers in a recorded form so that it may inspire them to form and invent some new thoughts. I am personally thankful to all these learned scholars.

Though, the seminar was held in the regime of Dr. Bhagat Singh, it could not be possible for the department to bring it out in the regime of Dr. H. K. Manmohan Singh due to unavoidable circumstances. It is the inspirational and academic attitude of the present Vice Chancellor Dr. Joginder Singh Puar that came to my rescue in bringing out this book. I am personally thankful to the present Vice Chancellor. Dr. Hazara Singh is a legend in the field of publication. He stood by me throughout in the preparation of this book in the form of guidance. My thanks are due to Dr. Puar and Dr. Hazara Singh. Again I am thankful to all the contributors of this book. I hope our readers will enjoy this book and shall convey their views also.

GURNAM KAUR

Editor

SIKH POLITICAL VALUES—AN ANALYSIS

DR KEHAR SINGH

The Sikh Gurus concern was with the total personality of man. Their's was an integrated approach to human and social problems. Sikh thought and tradition gravitates towards realisation of essential spirituality by the individuals and heroic struggle for the realisation of certain cherished human ideals. There is no dichotomy or contradiction in the spiritual and temporal ideals of a believer according to Sikh thought. As a matter of fact, a moral life is dependent on the realisation of supernatural self and this realisation in turn finds expression in righteous deeds in the social context. Here spiritual idealism subsumes secular values. Human life is considered to be an opportunity to cultivate inherent spirituality which must result in truthful living. Truthful living is rubric for all the social and political values. Indeed it is one major test to find out if a soul is liberated or still in bondage. One who does not revel in altruism is not the carrier of God's grace for altruism is a necessary attribute of a liberated person.¹

Sikh Gurus had, through their precept and praxis established a religion of a householder—a religion not of the recluse but of a social being. They viewed man and his needs in the socio-political context of a real world. They had, no doubt, insisted on the inadequacy and futility of the material pursuits becoming the be all and end all of human life. The ultimate goal is the unity with God after the cessation of cycle of birth and death. But, for the realisation of summum bonum of human life, cultivation of moral virtues is a precondition². The virtuous person must have certain qualities—psychic as well as physical. Along with an attitude of detachment, and spiritual and physical piety he must live a socially useful life. The social and political matters are not out of bound for him. These must engage his attention because they have a bearing on his religious life.

According to this view, spirituality and temporality are correlative each partaking other. Infact the very salvation of man depends upon the service of mankind³. Service to mankind at critical junctures may necessitate the use of physical force to fight unjust and tyrannous men and institutions. The sixth and the tenth Sikh Gurus had invoked the arms against the then oppressive rulers. The use of violent methods for the sake of righteousness, as a matter of last resort, is one of the established doctrines of the Sikhs⁴.

The academic analysis of social and political ideas and institutions of the Sikhs has of late received some attention of the scholars. Nevertheless, the number of books and articles in the field is still very small. However, there seems to be a near consensus amongst the writers about the social and political values cherished by the Sikh Gurus. Almost all agree, with a varying degree of emphasis, that the Sikh Gurus stood for equality, liberty, justice and universal fraternity. Our effort in this paper would be to analyse the nature and significance of political values of liberty, justice and universal welfare in the context of precept and praxis of the Sikh Gurus.

Liberty

Sikh view of life includes a concern for the freedom of the individuals and peoples. Guru Nanak's paeans of blood at the plunder and carnage by men of Batar does convey a message. The victory of Babar has no doubt been explained in metaphysical terms of the operative will of God. But the incident has also been characterised as a sinful venture⁵. Its sinfulness cannot be explained totally in terms of bloodshed and anarchy let loose by it. Guru Nanak was conscious enough of the implications of foreign rule over a country. Guru Nanak talked in terms of Hindustan and its people. Our point may become more clear if we refer to the ill effects of alien rule as highlighted by Guru Nanak. He pointed out how the Muslim rule had led to forsaking of language and culture by the Hindu elite⁶. This had also led to certain restrictions on the freedom of faith and worship of the Hindus. Certain discriminatory taxes imposed on the Hindu places of worship made Guru Nanak painfully aware of the indignities suffered under alien elite actuated by religious fanaticism and narrowness.

Guru Nanak's forceful and poignant condemnation of the brutalities of the then rulers represents the Sikh attitude towards an immoral and cruel treatment meted out to the people⁷. The fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, and the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, became martyrs to this very public cause. The sacrifices of Guru Gobind Singh and innumerable other Sikhs further crystallised the principles of a good polity.

After the advent of Muslim rule in India there has all along been a marked dissociation between government and society. This was partly because the establishment of political centres was the work of "foreign" conquerors, while the rest of society adapted to the changing fortunes of kings and conquerors. And, with the exception of a few barbaric ravages by passing invaders, the conquerors in turn, respected the autonomy of society and its religious tradition. Lack of strong identification with a given political order, the presence of a retentive base of the cultural system, and the tendency to de-emphasize the importance of secular changes, were precisely the conditions that permitted a continuous adaptation to, rather than hostility towards changes in the political sphere. There was little sense of a threat to the essence of Indianness for the essence was not really political⁸. But such a dichotomous view is not sustainable according to Sikh thought. The alien rule does threaten the cultural content of man's life and as such must be fought against⁹.

The Sikh Gurus do not recognise the right of the political rulers to interfere in the freedom of faith and worship. Guru Tegh Bahadur offered his head but did not compromise his commitment to the freedom of conscience. It would be interesting to note that he sacrificed his life for the religious symbols and observances which did not form part of his way of life but of the Hindu majority of India¹⁰. But behind this was an important article of Sikh faith. The Gurus admit the authenticity of more than one modes of worship of God. Given the honesty of purpose one must be allowed to do what one believes to be right. As the ultimate being is impersonal, it need to be experienced and declared by individual persons. Hence the notion of myriad paths to reality. Such a belief logically leads to a concept of a plural society and an open polity. Moreover, Sikh Gurus were aware of the multi-ethnic nature of Indian society. The Gurus seem to be stressing the right of every ethnic group to

determine and shape its own destiny. According to this line of argument no single tradition can provide the basis of unity. Search for unity in diversity would be both culturally correct and politically wise attitude in the Indian context.

The Sikh view accepts both the concepts of freedom, negative as well as positive. It is both freedom from external restraint and freedom gained through submission. So far as the relationship between the state and morals is concerned, it is nearer the negative concept of freedom. No where in Sikh thought is it accepted that the state's duty is to make people moral and righteous. The state is expected to maintain the necessary conditions for freedom and righteous action.

Freedom, on the other hand, is gained by submitting to the will of God. Freedom here becomes willing obedience of the orders of the Guru and following the path shown by him. It is only thus that man becomes free from all types of bondages¹¹.

We can build the ideal of liberty on the premise of the moral standard postulated by the Sikh Gurus. In Sikh thought every human being is an end unto himself. It is self-realisation towards which every individual is enjoined to strive. Such a postulate involves liberty without which talk of self realisation may sound incongruous. The Gurus' effort was to free the individual not only from superstition and ignorance but also from the strangulating control of the greedy priestly class and the tyrannous political governance. They brought man into direct relationship with God.

The Sikh Gurus had invoked the birth right of every individual to be free. The man is made the ultimate judge of the worth or desirability of every social and political institution. "Gurus had pointed out that in reality all social institutions and associations are intended to help the individual attain the main object of his life; self-realization or the development of the best in him. But to achieve this, the society must be organised on the healthy basis of justice, fellow feeling, liberty and equality and must be free from oppression of any kind. Enslavement had been dubbed a great curse, for under it one does not get happiness even in dream"¹².

That the social and political structures of the times were

viewed to be unjust and oppressive comes out clearly from the observations of the Gurus contained in the Sikh scriptures.¹³ Guru Nanak chides the Hindu elite for betraying their vocation of defending the society and providing it leadership in the hour of crisis¹⁴. Guru Nanak's social thought symbolises this revolt against tyranny and injustice in the socio-political situation of his time. This revolt becoming pronounced and armed during the course of time is in no way contradictory to the stand taken by Guru Nanak¹⁵.

The problem of liberty and its articulation varies from age to age and person to person. The western philosophers of individual liberty in 17th and 18th century had construed liberty in terms of freedom from the arbitrary and capricious political rulers. Whereas in 19th century, J.S. Mill feared not only the political controls but the tyrannous tentacles of social customs and opinions also. The socialists and the communists, on the other hand, have come to believe that it is the arbitrary and capricious economic system, capitalism, which is the real danger to individual freedom¹⁶. The Sikh Gurus, however view that weakness¹⁷—spiritual, moral, physical—lands man in bondage whereas its opposite, strength¹⁸, makes for freedom. The source of all ills, according to them is being self-centred and oblivious of the reality of God. The fountain head of strength is wisdom, *giani*¹⁹. Hence a great emphasis on spiritual effort and self discipline as a surer way of realisation of freedom in individual and social life. This does not, however, imply that the common human effort towards a social order conducive to human freedom is to be kept suspended till such time as the men realise their spiritual self. Quite contrary to it, the spiritual effort and appropriate social activity supplement and complement each other. Spirituality is to be realised in, and has to find expression in social activity.

According to the Gurus, liberty becomes real only when : (a) man is freed from the bondage of superstitions and oppressive social practices and beliefs²⁰, (b) economy is unexploitative²¹; (c) rulers are just and responsible²²; (d) freedom from fear is firmly ingrained in the minds of men; (e) popular sovereignty is institutionalised²³.

Justice :

One of the attributes of God, highlighted by the Gurus, is

that He is just²⁴. And a Sikh who has to develop his personality after the life-pattern of the Gurus²⁵ is supposed to live and die for justice. Gurus postulate the existence of a cosmic moral order, and justice is one of the elements of moral spirit permeating the universe. Whosoever does wrong has to suffer at the hands of the Dispenser of justice. The operative principle of justice in Sikhism is then an appropriate system of rewards and punishments²⁶. The socio-political system should be so organised and operated that the righteous get a place of honour and the wrong doers get punishment due to them. Only such a system would be just. That the principle of justice is operative in the divine scheme, as understood by Gurus, becomes evident from the sacred verses.

In Guru Nanak's estimation the then rulers were veritable butchers forgetful of the purposes for which they were instituted. Their life style, as depicted in the sacred verses of the Gurus' was indulgent and rapacious. They were moral wrecks and lost in the things of the world. They lacked the virtues necessary for their vocation. The divine order cannot suffer such wrong doers for long and ultimately sets into action corrective forces for restoring the balance. The divine idea is operative in human history. It finds expression in different persons, peoples, and forces. That the then kings, big and small, had betrayed their trust and consequently lost all the moral and material where-withals and justification of remaining the rulers of the people. That they no more remained qualified to rule was the sure sign of impending divine retribution. Their defeat at the hands of Babar, the messenger of death (Yam) was well deserved, in the operative divine scheme²⁷.

The Christian (Augustinian) view that the existence of unjust rulers is the result of sinful nature of man²⁸ and the Hindu view that they are the result of bad karmas of the people in previous lives²⁹ is not emphasised in Sikh thought. Fighting injustice is professed to be the life mission of Guru Gobind Singh. The positive concept of justice can be deduced from what the Gurus have described to be unjust in the then society and polity. Gurus have described such kings to be unjust as fail to protect their populace from external aggression, are cruel and extortionists, do not protect the righteous and rather extend patronage to the unrighteous, fail to ensure a system of administration

free from graft, in brief, those who fail to live up to their vocation.

In Social relationship the attitude of caste superiority³⁰, practice of untouchability, lascivious attitude towards the beautiful women other than one's wife³¹, belief in the inequality of men etc. are considered to be unjust.

In economic field, the Gurus condemned usurping the other man's right, and acquiring the things which do not rightfully belong to a person. They believed that amassing of wealth involves commission of sinful act³². Squandering away the resources of nature in wasteful manner is also condemnable. Eating without working and living like parasites has been strongly disapproved³³. Beggary is degrading³⁴ and this dehumanising practice is thought to be the result of greed of the rulers and inhumanity of the rich.

In the administrative field, corruption, graft, lack of impartiality constitute unjust practices³⁵.

The root cause of all these social, economic, administrative, and political ills is the ignorant, lethargic, indifferent, and frightened and listless populace³⁶.

Justice would not only mean the absence of the above mentioned ills in the various fields. It has also a positive connotation. Justice demands the establishment of a system wherein the fuller development of the human faculties is facilitated. Hence the Gurus envisaged a society wherein justice informs all its activities and institutions³⁷.

At the individual level, justice would mean cultivating the finer aspects of human self by disciplining the baser elements, propensities and passions. This is possible, the Gurus assert, only by becoming God oriented³⁸.

Universal Welfare

According to the Gurus affectionate, sweet and respectful attitude toward fellow human beings and commitment to the welfare of all is the hallmark of the social conduct of a religious person. He must be compassionate and considerate toward others. Guru Nanak says that religion is the son of compansion. So the clear implication is that to be truly religious one must be compassionate. Guru Nanak further says that to be compassionate one is required to exercise restraint over one's desires and cultivate a temperate life style³⁹.

The problem of universal welfare in empirical situation becomes a problem of attitude towards established authority. And if the established system is found to be deficient or unsuitable then it is one of devising ways and means to reform or change the system as the case may be. Suffering a cruel system may be a necessary expedient keeping in view the situational constraints but indifference towards it or its acceptance is not in line with the Sikh thought. Fight against such a system is the mark of religious hero. One of the criteria to judge the suitability of system is to see if it takes care of the down trodden the lowest of the lowly⁴⁰. Because according to the Gurus, God blesses those who take care of lowly. It is this part of the society which should attract the attention of religious heroes. Without caring for them and uplifting them the welfarist effort would be anything but general. Such an effort, in most cases, brings the righteous people in a situation of conflict with the powers that be. This brings us to the problem of relationship between the partisan goals of the different individuals and parties in a conflict. It is the righteous cause which gives a fight necessary religious and moral sanction. It is this which makes it a Dharam Yudh and of universal interest. Khalsa fights the battles for the down trodden but these are in the interest of total society in the sense that these help remove the sick and unhealthy parts of the body politic and give it a new momentum to move in the right direction. The daily congregational Sikh prayer is not only a proclamation for the good of all but also a repeated resolve of dedication to the same. Those who have strove towards this end through trial and tribulation are respectfully remembered and extolled as examples to be emulated.⁴¹

Realisation of these values requires the involvement of total personality of man. His thoughts, his dreams, his passions and emotions, his intellect and will and his actions have all to be oriented towards these values. How did it become possible for the Gurus to infuse a new spirit for a dignified life in the minds of listless and inane masses? Certainly not through intellectual argumentation and philosophical discourses. It was through setting personal example which directly appealed to the hearts and minds of people. It was through their own pious life and righteous actions that they could create a community of spiritually awakened, mentally alert and physically fit and

robust men ever ready to involve themselves in creative activity, A healthy outlook was developed by :

1. stressing the reality of temporal human existence,
2. making moral action a necessary attendant of spiritual activity,
3. by underlining the moral freedom and responsibility of men for their actions,
4. by assuring that God is with the righteous,⁴²
5. by declaring that they are the instruments of Godly mission and hence strengthening the belief that there could not be a higher ideal than to die for such a mission,⁴³
6. by freeing them of superstitions and formal religious rites and rituals and;
7. lastly, by encouraging them to question the legitimacy of the social, religious and political elite.⁴⁴

Underlying all this was a realisation that the earthly values of richness, sensual pleasures, secular power, reputation, good name, physical health and adulation do not provide enduring fulfilment.⁴⁵ Nor do these qualify a man to be acceptable in the court of the Divine.⁴⁶

In sum, we can say with Guru Nanak that man is afflicted with illness, and rapport with God is the cure, for, impurities result from a false outlook.⁴⁷ Thus has Guru Nanak called upon man to turn Godwards by declaring that all outlooks, social planning and political endeavours are futile and vain unless they are fundamentally grounded in fear of God.⁴⁸ Fear and love of God makes a man of religious enlightenment socially committed.

According to Sikh thought these values are universal and not relative. They are related to the essence of man which being common for all times and places gives them the universal character. And this has been conceived to be spiritual. The Gurus are emphatic that the ultimate source and sustenance of moral strength is God-consciousness.⁴⁹ The belief in the universality of these values does not necessarily mean that means and methods for their realization and their operationalization had been or would remain the same for all times and people, Their concern being with the real life situations their professors have to take into consideration the objective situation. Without

this their profession will remain a pious wish or an empty declaration.

The then social and political situation was kept in view by the Gurus in their own unique way. Out of this perception they identified the challenge before them and it was in this context that they devised their response. The challenge in brief was; making the then society and its rulers aware that the life which they were living was incongruous with their professed religious values. This is what they had to say to the different sections of the society :

- (i) The rulers : you are veritable butchers, ruling by dint of sheer physical force and as such not worthy of your vocation in the light of your religion.
- (ii) The social and religious elite : The Hindu and Muslim elite is part of the corrupt system. The Hindu elite are chided and deprecated by saying that the Khatri have forsaken their vocation of wielding sword for the sake of their Dharma, the Brahmans instead of enlightening the people are rather confusing them and burdening them with numberless empty rites and rituals. The Yogis of spiritual worth have hidden themselves in the safety of high mountains⁵⁰ and the fake ones have taken to the path of asceticism and instead of doing something useful for society have become parasites. The Gurus of Bhakti cult have taken to mimicry of Hindu avtaras as a source of livelihood⁵¹. And the Muslim elite has forgotten the spiritual and moral essence of Islam and has reduced religion only to formal observances⁵².
- (iii) The Masses : their mental and physical conditions can be well guessed from the role played by their social and religious leaders. No wonder that they are ignorant, superstitious, cowardly and inane.

The Guru's appeal is to all and not only to the alienated and dispossessed. Nevertheless, the alienated and the dispossessed become the main recruiting ground of the Gurus. This was so because of the revolutionary nature of their programme. If the ideal was to create an egalitarian, just and free society the appeal and exhortation had to be made to the populace who was to be uplifted. It were the masses who were

suffering cruelty and injustice and primarily it were they who were called upon to fight against the unrighteous system.

The Sikh ideology's response to the then prevalent situations generated certain operative norms in the social and political fields. These were :

1. Common congregation and dining (sangat and pangat)
2. The unity of Bhakti and Shakti (meeri and peeri)
3. Fear not frighten not.
4. Fighting cruelty and injustice
5. Productive labour and sharing the fruits thereof.
6. Sacrifice in the name of the Guru the highest virtue and goal.
7. Guru's will is operative in the collective will of the Khalsa.
8. Khalsa is destined to rule.

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1. (a) Nihar Ranjan Ray, *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society*, Punjabi University, Patiala 1970, p. 86. He observes, "To be able to achieve the integration of temporal and spiritual seems to me to have been the most significant contribution of Guru Nanak to the totality of the Indian way of life of medieval India. Indeed, he seems to have reared up a new image of Socio-religious community given at once to temporal and spiritual pursuits of life".
- (b) Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, *Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine*, Bahri Publications Pvt, Ltd., New Delhi 1983, p. 16. He has elaborated this point on the basis of his view of Sikh metaphysics being 'Spiritualist-Materialist' as against the 'Spiritualist-Idealist tradition of Vedanta'.
2. Sri Guru Granth Sahib p. 728, 766
 - (a) Bhandā dhoi bāis dūp devahu tou dūdhay kōu javohu,
 - (b) Sanjh Krijai gūne kerī chhodi avgūn chaliye.
 - (c) Vin gūn kite bhakti na hoi,
3. Ibid, p. 26
 - (a) Vich duniya sev Kmāyea.
 - Ta dargeh bāisen pāye.
4. Guru Gobind Singh, *Zafarnama*, Chun kar as humā heelte dar guzashta.
5. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 360 and 722
 - (a) khurasan khasmana kia Hindustan draya.
 - (b) pap ki janj lai kablon dhaya jori mange dan ve lalo.

6. Ibid, p. 1191 and 663
 - (a) Kuja bang niwaj musala neel rup banwari
Ghari ghari mian sabhna jian boli avar tumari.
 - (b) Khatrian ta dharma chhodiya malech bhakhiya gahi,
Srist sabh ik Varan hoi dharma ki gati rahi.
7. (a) S. G. G. S. p. 145 Kali kati raje kasai dharmu pankh kar udraya.
Ibid, p. 663.
(b) Varan Bhai Gurdas, p. 15
8. Rajni Kothari, working papers for the 1978 All India Political Science Conference held at Patiala. pp. 11-15
9. S. G. G. S. p. 1191
Deval Devatian Kar laga aisi kirati chali.
10. Guru Gobind Singh, Bachittar Natak.
11. This is the Leit motif of all the verses about the relationship between the guru and the sikhs. (See Asa di war)
12. S. G. G. S., p. 138.
13. Refer to note 7 above and Zafarnama of Guru Gobind Singh.
14. refer to note 6 above.
15. See Sikh Revolution (Jagjit Singh) The Sovereignty of the Sikh Doctrine (Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia) and var 26 (Bhai Gurdas) Bachittar Natak (Guru Gobind Singh) Some view it differently and think that militarisation of Sikh Church was a policy contrary to the pietist preachings of Guru Nanak.
Some Historians of great eminence like J. N. Sarkar, Forquhar and even Arnold J. Toynbee have been a little uncharitable to Guru Gobind Singh when assessing his work. Toynbee thinks that "In itself to be provoked into militancy, Sikhism renounced its spiritual birthright and opted for the limited and uncreative role of becoming a local political community in a single province of the Hindu world, As quoted by K. S. Narang in his article 'Socio-Religious Ideals of Guru Gobind Singh' in Sikhism and Sikh Society, Simla, 1967.
16. According to Marx the era of freedom sets in only with the coming into existence of a classless communist society.
17. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1429.
Balu chhutakiya bandhan pare kachhu na hot upai
Kahu Nanak ab ot hari Gaj jio hohu sahai.
18. Ibid.
Balu hoa bandhan chhute sabhu kichhu hot upai
Nanak sabhu kichhu tumre hath mehi tum hi hot sahai
19. Ibid., p. 293
Nirbhau jape sagal bhau mite.
Prabh kirpa te prani chhute.
20. Ibid, p. 634
Dubdha na parho har bin hor na pujao
Marhi masani na jai
(b) Guru Gobind Singh's Swaiye
Puran prem partiti saje brat gore marhi mat bhul na mane.

- (c) Varan Bhai Gurdas, p. 9
Kise na pujai sila sunni koi gori marhi pujave.
And the Last line.
Fokte dharmi bharam bhulave.
21. S. G. G. S., p. 141 Haq parayia Nanaka usu suer usu gai.
22. Ibid., p. 1240
Raje chuli niav ki parhia sachu dhyanu.
23. Ibid., p. 167
(a) Hum rulte phirte koi bat na puchhta Guru Satgur sang kire
ham thape.
(b) temporal sovereignty vested in the Khalsa Panth.
Guru Gobind Singh
Khalsa mero roop hai khas.
Khalse meh haun karon niwas.
24. S. G. G. S. pp. 84, 90, 1990.
25. S. G. G. S. P. 223
Jaisā sevai taiso hoei.
26. Dr. Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, Punjabi University Patiala.
27. S. G. G. S. p. 1360
Āpai dosu na deḡ kartā jamu kari mugalu chaḡhāyā.
28. William Ebenstein *Great political thinkers* (3rd Ed.) p. 193.
29. Divinity of kings has been a well established political belief of the
pre-modern Hindus.
30. S. G. G. S. p. 1128
(a) Jāti ka garabu na kari mūrakh gavārā.
(b) Ibid. M. I, p. 15
naḡchañ aṇḡri nīch jāti.....
(c) Ibid
Pūchhahu joti na jānahu jati.
31. Bhai Gurdas, *Vārān* (29/11)
Dekh parāyīāñ changiyāñ
Māvāñ dhīyāñ bhaināñ Jānain
32. S. G. G. S. p. 417
(a) Pāpāñ bājhahu hovai nāhī muyāñ sathi na jāī
(b)
Pāp kari kari sanchiai.....
33. Ibid. p. 790.
Phitu eivehā jīviyā jitu khāei vadhāyā petu
34.
Mangan gaya so mar gaya mangan mūli na jā
35. Bhai Gurdas, *Vārān* (1/30)
qājī hoe rishvati vaddhi lai ke haku gavāī
36. S. G. G. S., p. 469
andhī rājati giān vihūñī bhāhi bhare mardāru.
37. Ibid, p. 74
Sabh sukhāl vuthiyāñ eihu hoyā halemī rāju jīou.

38. Ibid, p. 469
giyān kā badhā manu rehai gur binu giyanu na hoei.
39. Ibid p. 467
Onī duniyā torhe baṇḍhanaṇ ann pānī thoṛhā khāyā.
40. Ibid., p. 15
nichān andri nīch jāti nīchī hūn ati nīchu
Nanak tin kai saṅgi sāthi vadiyān sion kiya ris,
41. Sikh prayer
Jināh singhān singhnīān ne dharam het sīs dite.....
42. S. G. G. S. p. 783
Santān ke kārājī āpi khaloeiyā hari kaṇmu karāvani āyia rām.
43. Ibid p. 558.
tai sāhib kī bāt ji ākhai kahu nānak kiya dījai.
sīsu vadhe kari baisanu dījai vinu sir sev karījai.
44. Asa di var & Babar Bani
45. S. G. G. S. P. 14
Motī ta maṇḍar oṡsarahi ratanī tā hohi jāḥāou.
46. Ibid M. 3, p. 509
Manu taou mailgalu hoei rahā niksiyā kioukari jāci.
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sansaru rogi nam daru mailu lagai sach bina.
48. Ibid, M. I, p. 467.
Lakh Nekīān Chaṅgiyāīān lakhu Puṇān Parvān.
49. S G. G. S. p. 12
hari bisarat tere gun galiyā
50. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan* (1/29)
Sidhu chhap bai the parbatīn kaun jagat kaou pār outārā.
51. S. G. G. S. p. 465
rotiyān kārani pūrahi tāl.
52. Ibid p. 662
(a) Kādī kūḥhu boli malu khāci.
(b) Varan Bhai Gurdas (1/30) p. 15
Qāji hoe rishvatī vadhī lai ke haku gvāci.

SIKH WORLD-VIEW AND SOCIAL DYNAMISM

DR NIRBHAI SINGH

The quest for metaphysical structure of reality seems to be the cardinal concern of Sikhism. With a view to evolving a coherent philosophical world-view *weltanschauung* the Sikh Gurus interpreted the myriad phenomena and experiences referring to various levels of speculations. It is this philosophical perspective which is meant by the term *weltanschauung*. There are, however, different ways to approach and determine ontological structure of the world-view. In this paper I have used interpretative and analytical methodology which would systematize the variant spiritual elements of Sikh Faith. These are treasured in the *Guru Granth Sāhib*, the revealed scripture of Sikhism. It is an attempt to put forth a rational and crystallized viewpoint to work out the ontological structure and its implications in existential situations of man. It appears to me that the Sikh Gurus might have articulated their own experiences and intuitions (*anubbhav*) of reality and have in this process tried to resolve difficulties noticed in the earlier religious systems. It would be pertinent to point out that Islam and Hinduism provided an intellectual environment for the origins and growth of Sikh world-view.

Sikhism propounds an objective idealism of spiritualism with the characteristics of dynamism, non-dualism and social involvement. Sikhism gives priority to the spirit (*siv*) over the matter (*sakti*). Hence, it is spiritualism. And this type of spiritualism is interchangeable with objective idealism. All the time there is an emphasis on dynamic non-dualism. Sikhism, thus, presents a systematic objective non-dual philosophy of spirituality.

It is usually considered that idealism is opposed to realism and is often antithetic to naturalism and materialism. Idealism of Sikhism tries to strike a unique reconciliation between spirit-

ualism and materialism (or naturalism). It accepts material elements as manifest aspects of the subtle spiritual continuum. The material (or gross) elements are spiritualized to harmonize them within non-dual structure of the *Ik* (lit-one.)

The *Ik* as an ontological category is not a static and abstract principle devoid of time (*kāl*). The very nature of *kāl* is momentary and evanescent. It is the dynamic aspect of the *Ik*. The principle of dynamism, the *hukam*, has been posited with the *ik*. The process of creation is carried out by the *hukam*. It explains the historicity of multiple elements within the non-dual dynamic structure of Being (*dhāt*). Sikhism regards *ātman* as spiritual and subtle 'essence'. The noun 'essence' comes from the verb 'esse', 'to be' and the term *sati* is derived from the Sanskrit root '*asi*' which also means 'to be'. Therefore, these terms refer to a dynamic existence which is spiritual in character. Human person (*deh*) is material and gross aspect of the spiritual continuum. It has the continuity and immanence in every element of the microcosm (*pīṇḍ*) and the macrocosm (*brahmaṇḍ*). Sikhism lays more emphasis on the historicity of dynamism, non-dualism and social involvement. These characteristics imply that Sikhism puts forth a dynamic metaphysical system. It is a concrete system because the manifest elements are included therein. Therefore, these are harmonized within its all-inclusive structure.

There is another way of explaining the nature of reality in terms of impersonal unity and personal deity. The nature of the *Ik* can be viewed both from impersonal and personal standpoints. The main thrust in the Sikh Scripture seems to be that the *Ik* encompasses both the impersonal and the personal aspects. The *Ik* is the *Ik Kartāpurakh* or *Akālpurakh* that creates in historical process the manifest forms out of Itself and reabsorbs them within Itself. The unmanifest (*nirguṇa*) aspect of the spiritual continuum is impersonal unity and the manifest (*sarguṇa*) one is personal deity. The belief in this two-faceted fluxional nature of reality has necessary ontological bearing on the social dimension of man. Since the manifest world is accepted as real, so social involvement is also real and necessary condition of emancipation.

Guru Nānak with his *sui generis* metaphysical system seeks to overcome the crisis emerging out of two distinct religious

traditions of Islam and Hinduism. He articulated a system in which the existent Islamic and Indian spiritual cultures assume a new dimension of affirmation of empirical life and the world. It resulted in social dynamism and involvement. Guru Nanak seems to have reinterpreted two spiritual traditions. We get a cue of this fact from his own revealed verse in the "Japuji". He makes a categorical statement that all the Vedas and the Semitic Books (*Katebā*) assert that ultimate reality is undifferentiated 'essence' (*asalū ik dhāt*/Guru Granth Sāhib, p. 5). The *dhāt* is the ever continuing 'essence' of the *Ik*.

Personality of deity was of secondary significance in Indian spiritual thought but it dominates in the West Asian religions. In Sikh philosophy personal deity is posited for practical purposes. Personal deity being a symbolic and metaphoric concept refers to something which is itself not a referent. When we take a symbol for reality, it becomes idolatry. As a matter of fact personal deity seems to have been posited as symbolic of the *Ik* for worship and self-ascent. As the spiritual seeker proceeds towards higher and higher states of freedom, personality of deity is gradually absorbed in the Formless Being *ātamu chīnh bhae nirankārī*(GGS, p. 415). Not to speak of personality of the deity, Sikhism even dissolves personality of personal guruship and identifies the *sabad-guru* with the revealed truth enshrined in the Sikh Canon.

Guru Nanak appears to confront the basic philosophical problem of reconciling the idea of the personal deity with the impersonal unity so as to arrive at a coherent world-view. Sikhism lays emphasis on the impersonal unity of the non-dual dynamic Being without suppressing its personal aspect. Impersonal unity is the format of ontological structure and personal deity is an object of devotion for self-realization. In the Sikh Scripture chasm between impersonal and personal aspects of the Being is not accepted. In Sikhism non-dual dynamism is an ontological necessity to reconcile transcendence and immanence or spiritualism and secularism. Within this non-dual structure social aspect is a living reality.

The framework of reality has been delineated in the *mūlmantra*, the creedal tenet of the Sikh Scripture. It epitomizes the central format and spirit of the Sikh world-view. In the *mūlmantra*, Guru Nanak has simultaneously enunciated unity

of the personal deity and the underlying ontological impersonal unity. Although the *mūlmantra* refers to the attributes of the deity by using the words, like *kartāpurakh*, *nirbhau*, *nirvatr*, yet we find in it the spirit of impersonal nature of reality as well. The non-dual nature of the *Ik* along with its personal aspects; like *kartāpurakh*, constitutes the systematic dynamic unity of reality.

In Sikhism the systematic unity of reality has the characteristics of hierarchy and coherence. Here unity has a significant meaning which is to be interpreted within the framework of Sikh metaphysics. The concept of unity has been derived from the sacred syllable *Ikoāṁkār* (ੴ) which occurs in the beginning of the *mūlmantra*. The *Ikoāṁkār* may be split up into three segments : i.e. *ik*, *oām*, *kār*. The term *oām*, a sacred symbol of *sabad-brahman*, is a primordial cause of the manifest world (*kār*) (see *GGS*, *paurī-2*, p. 250). And the numeral one (ੴ) stands for the metaphysical unity. The nature of unity being dynamic the historical events of the manifest world (*bisthār*) are due to the *Ikoāṁkār*. We do not find that in the Sikh Canon the syllable *oām* always comes along with the numeral one. Whenever *oām* is prefixed to the numeral *Ik*, it lays emphasis on the non-dual structure of the reality. When we put together three segments (*ik*, *oām*, *kār*) it would indicate the non-dual unity. And this manifest world is relatively real as it is reflection of the non-dual reality whose manifestation it is (see *GGS*, p. 294).

The term 'systematic' may be considered as having two complimentary characteristics of 'hierarchy' and 'coherence'. First, in the words of Guru Nanak 'hierarchy' implies that all manifestations have emanated from the non-dual eternal Truth (*sache*) (*GGS*, p. 19). Guru Amar Das puts it that the manifest forms emanated from the subtle Formless Being (*nirāṅkār*) which is the potential cause of all the manifest elements (*ākār*) (*GGS*, p. 1055). It forms a hierarchical structure which proceeds from the subtle to the gross and *vice versa*. In the dynamic process in historicity the spiritual 'essence' remains as such. All forms of the manifest (*sargunā*) represent varying degree of spiritual continuum. The dynamic unity of the *Ik* is expressed through the one dynamic principle (*hukam*) which permeates the hierar-

chical structure.

The systematic unity conceived in the Sikh Canon regards sentient and insentient units in a hierarchical order. The relationship among the units is internal and necessary. It puts forth the concept of a structure within a higher structure or a unity within a higher unity. The *khaṇḍ*s in the "Japuaji" seem to present a hierarchy within graded structures. In this system substructure or subunity would be a unit for the higher structure or unity and that structure or unity is further a unit for a higher unity. And ultimately this process culminates in the absolute unity. All units and relations are dissolved in the Formless Unity (*nirāṅkā*r). The process of spiritual progression of the self acquires higher and higher harmony in the hierarchy of the *khaṇḍ*s.

From the standpoint of dimensions the sentient beings are higher than the non-sentient ones because the former have consciousness (*suratī*). Guru Nānak also makes it explicit that deeds of the sentient beings are determined by the states of inward development of consciousness in varying degrees (*jehī suratī tehā tīn rāh*/GGS, pp. 24-25). Guru Nānak asserts that consciousness at the lower level of spiritual development is dominated by energy. When it is spiritually transformed by Guru's *sabad* (*bāṇī*) it ascends inwardly for realization of mystic unity with the *Ik*. When *suratī* is transformed into pristine consciousness (*sudhī*) the state of freedom is realized. The self becomes a centre of categorical imperative.

The other characteristic 'coherence' signifies inner harmony. In the context of Sikhism coherent system is one in which all the related elements of the dynamic structure are freed from inner contradictions and of outward discords. These elements are regulated by one cosmic principle (*hukam*) (GGS, p. 223). And, from the epistemological standpoint the manifest forms (*ākār*) may at the level of partial knowledge seem incoherent, but a realized self (*brahamgīāṇī*) simultaneously harmonizes cognitive, conative and affective aspects and realizes *hukam* from within. Hence, the characteristics of 'hierarchy' and 'coherence' are regulated by one cosmic law (*hukam*).

In the dynamic structure of Sikhism the emphasis is laid on transitory and evanescent aspects of the manifest elements. These

transitory elements mirror the eternal spiritual continuum. The perspective of dynamic reality is called *mahākāl*, the cosmic Time. It is the all-inclusive Time of times. In Guru Gobind Singh's revealed composition "Jāp Sāhib" *akālpurakh* subsumes *kāl* (time). It is therefore called *Sarab Kāle* (all-inclusive Time). on the other hand, the static metaphysical system transcends time. One of the most serious limitation of a static system is that it denies the real historical dimension of development of the self and, consequently, it regards a particular temporal event a frozen or stilled and nicely finished unit.

The view of dynamic unity is purposive because progression for freedom of the self is central in Sikhism. But the prophetic rectilinear conception of historical time and the Indian circular view of mythical time (*kāl*) are more spatial categories. Their use in the portrayal of dynamic progression is partly legitimate in terms of the contemporary view which refers to the event and the entity in spatio-temporal terms. However, a more exhaustive view of development and change would appear to be more rational and cogent if it is conceived in terms of a purely temporal process in which the 'essence' of *akāl* is eternal (i.e. *nah kichh janmeh nah kichh mare.../GGS, p. 281*).

Sikhism presents the dynamic process of reality in circular and historical time and considers that the temporal events are immanent in eternity because of the dynamic character of the Infinite. Therefore actions in historical time are relatively real because of dynamic ontological nature of reality. No action of a realized person is reflex action. His every action has immanence of the *Akāl*, therefore, historical action in time (*kāl*) is accepted as a living reality. Time encompasses all diversities of temporal events. It is, thus, a concrete system which is rich with flitting emanations of multiplicity of historical events. In this way Sikhism seems to reconcile the transcendent and the immanent aspects of non-dual reality (i.e. *nirāṅkār ākār āp nīrgun sargun ek GGS, p. 250*).

In a dynamic process of time transcendence from the material world and at the same time to be in time is the basic problem in Sikhism. The theological dimension of time poses a question whether freedom is possible in this life or thereafter. It is possible in this very life only with *gurprasādi*. It is the highest state of a liberated person (*gurmukh*) who is to be in time and

out of time. It is possible only if historicity of time as reality is accepted. The historical reality of time requires that action in time is to be treated real. This would reaffirm the empirical life and this worldliness. It will lead to social involvements and commitments.

In the existential situation it is very difficult to resolve the dilemma of action in time as it cannot be controlled. Realization of an abstract *Akal* (Timeless) is not possible. When we try to concretize it, it shall be distorted or would slip away. The *Siddhās*, *Saṇnyāsīs* and *Sūfīs* fakely compromised with action in time by renouncing it. They withdrew from the social commitments and stark realities of household life. The Sikh Gurus, on the other hand, preached and practised that to be in time or with time one has to accept reality of historical action. They created a balance between asceticism and over indulgence. Ecstasy (*sahaj avasthā*) in Sikhism is not withdrawal but an integrated and harmonized involvement in the social relations. This is how Sikhism comes forward with its unique contribution of reconciliation of the spiritual and the secular or the transcendent and the immanent.

Sikhism pronounces that historicity of action is to be affirmed and it should be reconciled with the non-dual ontology. It is difficult to uphold non-dual ontology if man's action is a hypothetical imperative. When it is a categorical imperative, it would justify non-dual ontology because there is no extrinsic good to be realized. *Hukam* as a categorical imperative is *a priori* inner principle for regulating man's conduct. *Hukam* is also a regulative principle of moral order. The will of a realized self is in tune with *hukam* (*hukam razāi chālṇā*/GGS, p. 1). Sikhism comes forth with a philosophy of 'will-to-action' in historical time. It is the crux of man's existential ontological necessity.

We are faced with a question as to how does Sikhism reconcile its pronounced dynamic outlook of social life with its non-dual ontology. At the advent of Sikhism (15th century) the ascetic attitude towards social life was in vogue. Empirical world and self were treated unreal. Social phenomena were regarded hindrances in the way of spiritual progression. Human action in historical time was not recognised as of real merit.

Sikhism considers social phenomenon as an inseparable aspect of the spiritual continuum. With a view to restoring

social relationships and social life historical action in time is reaffirmed. Human action in history regains a new vitality. Since man is imperfect he requires a larger social universe for attaining perfection. We cannot separate ourselves from the social group (*sangat*) because it is a necessary condition for spiritual development. For an ideal social universe, Guru Nanak envisages a 'hierarchical' and 'coherent' social structure of spiritual unity.

The ideal man of Sikhism in existential situation treats the household life and the forests of equal importance. The Sikh Gurus did not believe in absolute asceticism and withdrawal from the domestic life. They advocated an attitude of an inner renunciation but not a flight from the historical action. They also pleaded for a disinterested involvement in socio-political life. Their social thought breathes the spirit of life and world affirmations which resulted in social dynamism and optimism.

The Sikh perspective of spiritual progression also makes it clear that it is actualized through simultaneous inward illumination and outward social involvement by the spiritual aspirant. Both the approaches are complimentary to each other. Without realization of inward self-illumination (*ātam giān*) actions are mere formalism and ritualism (*karam kāṇḍ*). And without social aspect it is a fruitless egoism and negation of social relations. In this way Sikhism advances a synthetic viewpoint which entails affirmation of the social reality.

With a dynamic ontological structure Guru Nanak ushered in a purposive momentum against the Medieval ideal of the otherworldliness which gave rise to the prevalent practices of renunciation from the social commitments and household life. Asceticism was order of the day. Sikhism holds the view that asceticism negates living social realities and social relations. It contradicts its non-dual dynamic ontology. With the negation of social relationships man would become an independent and abstract finished unit. It will destroy the very basis of spiritual and moral struggle. For these reasons Sikhism is polemic to the ascetic way of life. It treats socio-political phenomenon a vital manifest reality. There is, however, no lust for temporal power and secular values. The *vis a tergo* of social involvement is spiritual values and secular values are sublimated and harmonized to discharge categorical imperatives.

The primary aim of Sikhism seems to be spiritual transformation of man with a view to stringing him with the socio-spiritual unity of the *Khālsā*. The *Khālsā*-brotherhood is a society realized selves. It advocates that spiritual living and worldly of life are inseparable aspects. The principle of internal relations as a cementing force in spiritual love (*prem*) which forges unity among men. The unifying principle of *bhakti* is reflected in the social relationships. The term *bhakti* is derived from the Sankrit root *bhaj* which literally means 'to share'. The sharing of the divine *nām* was extended through societal relationships to others in the *saṅgat*. The Sikh Gurus themselves carried forth the idea of democratizing spiritual *nām* in the practical social life. They added social dimension to the spiritual *nām*.

Along with spiritual ascent the Gurus preached for honest and hard work (*kirt karnā*) and sharing with others the fruits of hard earned material goods (*vaṇḍ chaknā*). They also started free kitchen (*guru kā langar*) to preach against hoarding which deprives man from the spiritual pursuits and causes hindrance to realize social harmony. Guru Nānak goes to the extent of asserting that sharing of honest earning is the essence of living with *hukam*. It leads to voluntary social service (*sevā*) of mankind that helps in eradicating *haumai* and over-indulgence in *māyā*. Man identifies his interests with the mankind and discharges disinterested actions (*sevā karat hoe nehkāmī.....*/ GGS, p. 286).

Sikhism recognizes household life as a social reality because all human actions are to be spiritually transformed and integrated within a family. Family is a fount of spiritual and secular values. It was extended to the holy assembly (*saṅgat*) and Guru Gobind Singh transformed *saṅgat* into the *Khālsā*-brotherhood. Celibacy would be a contradiction in terms and negation of social life. In the Kantian sense it cannot be universalized. Sikhism advocates that self-realization is to be sought while living in a family.

Guru Nānak imbibes concern for the social and the spiritual aspects of man to enable him to lead a life of self-respect and self-dignity. His devotional hymns (*sabads*) cast in the mould of dynamic non-dual unity stand for amelioration of mankind (*sarbat kā bhalā*). He was altruist in thought and deeds. Guru Nānak sought to establish an egalitarian society of spiritually realized and self-dignified persons. He played a major role in

restructuring cultural history of the land. His nine successors continued developing the socio-spiritual ideals of human life.

Man is a mode of the Infinite (*kartapurakh*). Since man is a spiritual unit in the dynamic structure, so it is necessary to explain some questions. Our main concern is with the man as a moral agent who is to be dynamically striving to realize his potential freedom while living in society but not of the society. Our main question is whether person is capable of taking a free decision. Sikhism conceives that man is potentially free and yearns to be actually free in existential situations. He is potentially free because his subtle nature of spiritual continuum warrants ontological freedom. His free will is to be concretized and carried out in the existential situation. It is carried out with guru's grace (*gurprasādi*). Man's freedom is related with these questions. What are the ontological dimensions of man? What is the nature of free will? How is person an agency of free will? What is the status of *karma* (action)? Is *saṅskār* a determining factor of human action?

First, man as a microcosm is constituted of spiritual energy (*śakti*) and consciousness (*śiv*) (*śiv śakti dehi mahī pāe*/GGS, p. 1056). The spiritual energy develops into self-illuminating consciousness from within. As a seed is a potential tree, similarly *śakti* is a potential *śiv*. The seed germinates and grows inward and outward only if it gets proper conditions of moisture and heat. In the same way *śakti*, *ab intra*, develops only if congenial environment of *saṅgat* and *satguru* come in a long way to elevate the spiritual seeker. With the help of *sabad-guru* and *satsaṅgat* spiritual energy (*śakti*) develops, grows and transforms into pure consciousness (*joti*). The *sabad-guru* is to be supplemented with the social conditions without which the self cannot actualize its potential ontological freedom.

In Sikhism *saṅgat* is a necessary obligation. *Nām-simran* is not a mere contemplation of retirement or alienation from social life. It is in the *saṅgat* that spiritual devotion is realized. Other persons are treated as equals and 'kingdom of ends'. Therefore, other persons are real and necessary. It is only through communal living that we realize our real selves. Sikhism advocates collective liberation. Spiritual development of man in cooperation with others culminates in a harmonious social order. Man develops

a dynamic personality of a free person with altruistic and detached attitude towards the mundane world. Sikhism holds the view that past *karmās* and caste of a man do not predetermine human freedom. When man transcends the effects of *haumai* and *māyā* he is a free moral agent. He becomes a fount of spiritual and moral values. He is an embodiment of altruism. Secular values get sublimated and harmonized.

It requires to change society of *manmukhs* into *gurmukhs*. The change culminates in actualization of *kartāpurakh* in the concrete social order. *Mūlmantra* is the format and spirit of ideal social unity. It is a perennial source of spiritual values. *Ajūni*, for example, rejects personal *guruship* as an intermediary force. It also rejects incarnation (*avtārvāda*) and prophethood. Personality and individuality of a spiritual intermediary has no room in Sikhism. Ideal man of Sikhism is to rise above petty secular interests. He is to be *nirbhau* and *nirvair*.

Man's momentary historical actions (*karma*) shall be treated as modes of the Infinite (*kartāpurakh*). They are relatively real because of dynamic character of the Infinite. The actions to be morally good ought to be in tune with the moral law (*hukam*). To realize moral law is to be in time with the moral order. The format of moral order is given in the *mūlmantra*.

Sikhism enjoins upon the moral agent to strive ceaselessly for realization of moral order in the society. And an ideal moral agent's basal elements are to be harmonized within the self. The higher and lower aspects of man represent degrees of development of human freedom.

The process of spiritual development of moral agent seems to have dual triumph over the ceaseless flow of real time in which history moves. *Jīvanmukt* attunes himself to the time and is simultaneously living in time in the society. The twofold process of identification and socialization determine the mode of unification (ecstasy) and socialization of man. The former is a process of acquiring perfect freedom by cutting through the morass of egoity (*haumai*) and *māyā* and the latter is identification with mankind. Collective good (*sarbat kā bhalā*) is the cementing principle which operates through love (*prem*).

The Sikh philosophy of history culminates in social dynamism. It recognises man's existential situation in the moral

struggle. The existential elements in Guru Nanak's philosophy of action (*karma*) need to be highlighted. He emphasised man as free moral agent in the historical time. He does not want one should run away from historical responsibilities. He fearlessly condemns Babur's invasion on India and castigates it as a 'marriage party of the sin' (GGS, p. 722-23). The central point in his philosophy of action is that ideal man (*gurmukh*) is one who lives in the real historical time and is responsible for all his voluntary actions. The realized a person struggles through social relationships in the existential situation to concretize socio-spiritual order.

The sacrament of baptism of the *Khaṇḍā* is a process of spiritual regeneration which steels wills of the initiates for moral actions. The casteless and classless *Khālsā* was divinely ordained on the principle of equality of persons. Guru Gobind Singh himself got baptized by the five beloveds (*pāñj pīāre*). He identifies his individual will with the collective will of the *Khālsā*. The *Khālsā* is a spiritual social unity of the realized persons. The *Khālsā* directly identifies himself with the *Akāl-purakh* and removes all intermediary forces. He identifies his will with the *sarbat-Khālsā*. The *Khālsā*-Order is a sublimation of the individual wills and affirmation of solidarity of the whole. Predominance of individual will (egoism) deprives non-dual ontology. When egoity (*haumai*) dominates, non-dual ontology cannot be realized. Thus the *khālsā* is a format for realization of non-dual dynamic. Being. True *khālsā* transcends death (*Kāl*) and becomes *nirbhau* and *nirvair*. The *Khālsā* is to start with *saṅgat* and will not stop at *saṅgat*. His moral actions are to be discharged on the categorical imperative. He regulates his life-style in consonance with the moral code of the *Khālsā rahit maryādā*. Whenever there is a conflict of obligations and duties or conflict of goods the function of *rahat maryādā* is to develop a reconciliation between the mutually incompatible obligations of historicity. Sikhism advocates that spiritual values are to be graded higher than the secular and material values. This is how the ideal of *Akāl-purakh* is concretized on the earth where individual wills surrender to the Divine will of *Akāl-purakh*.

SINGH SABHA MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

DR. GURDARSHAN SINGH DHILLON

The social reform activity of the Singh Sabha had for its basis tenets of the Sikh faith. It helped in rebuilding a social order, purged of Brahmanical influences. The movement went a long way in eradicating many social evils which were not only hindering the progress of the community but were also, like canker, eating into its vitals. The movement which enjoyed leadership of the Sikhs for nearly half a century will go down in the history of the modern Panjab as the greatest socio-religious reform movement of the Sikhs. It came as a great rejuvenating force at a time when Sikhism was at a very low ebb. Besides, eradicating many social evils, the movement aimed at building a new order based on Sikh tenets, with distinct social laws, customs and ceremonies for the Sikhs.

At the time of the annexation of the Panjab by the British, in 1849, the Sikhs were dispirited and demoralised. Besides the loss of political power, the Sikhs also suffered a religious, social and cultural decline. In fact this decline was visible even during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh¹ who despite great show of his devotion to Sikh religion, made no conscious effort to look after the religious social and cultural interests of his co-religionists. After his death, with the loss of rule, the Sikhs lost their sense of national pride and revealed a tendency to relapse into Hinduism² from which they had emerged under the guidance of their Gurus in the 15th and 16th centuries. They also began to decline in numbers.

Before the advent of the *Singh Sabha*, the *Nirankari* and the *Namdhari* movements had, no doubt, done the spade work of reform but they never rose to such dimensions as to influence the entire Sikh community. The Singh Sabha movement came as a rejuvenating force at a time when Sikh religion was *losing its*

identity. Devoid of its characteristic features, it had become a prey to Brahmanical Hinduism. Under the dead weight of meaningless rites and rituals, dogmas and superstitions, the socio-religious fabric of the community had been damaged beyond recognition. There were apprehensions that Sikhism might disappear altogether. It was at this crucial juncture that the Singh Sabha assume the leadership of the Sikhs.

The social programme of the Singh Sabha movement was a comprehensive one embracing many aspects of life like caste, marriage, status of women, position of intouchables etc. etc. These leaders were faced with the mighty task of bringing about the much-needed change in the social outlook of the *fallen* Sikh society and instilling in them a zeal for reform. Their goal was the much-needed reform of the Sikh society which had undergone social degradation during the last century.

The *Singh Sabha* had to face a major problem in the rigorous of caste rules. The division of the society into water-tight compartments, based on caste distinctions, prevented the growth of social solidarity and led to petty caste loyalties within a limited social circle.³ The distinctions between high-caste and low-caste Sikhs, *Jats* and *non-Jats*,⁴ *khatris* and *Aroras*, *Sehjdharis* and *Amritdharis* fostered a spirit of exclusiveness and were responsible for generating complexes of superiority and inferiority within the community. Each group arranged its marriages within the ranks of its own limited circle.⁵ Even the low-caste Sikhs, despite their inferior social status, were not free from caste prejudices. They were divided into three main categories, *Mazhabi Sikhs*, *Chammar Sikhs* and *Rahita Sikhs*.⁶ Their social dealings were strictly confined to their respective sects.

The *Singh Sabha* leaders were aware that the caste system had no basis in Sikh religion. It was mainly under the influence of Hinduism that the Sikhs had become victims of caste prejudices.⁷ The prevalence of a large number of castes and sub-castes among the Sikhs was fundamentally opposed to the principle of social equality advocated by the Sikh Gurus.⁸ But unfortunately the Bedis and Sodhis, at this time, due to their descent from Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh claimed a

better social status for themselves.⁹ The low-caste Sikhs or the so-called Sikh untouchables were the worst sufferers. They were looked down upon by the high-caste Sikhs who denied to them equal rights and privileges.

The leaders of the *Singh Sabha* rightly realised that without the removal of social inequality, all talk about social reform would be mere 'sound and fury signifying nothing'. The aim of social equality could be realised only by eliminating the prejudices of caste. The Amritsar *Singh Sabha*, though pledged to the goal of social reform, suffered from serious personal limitations. The leaders of the calibre of Baba Khem Singh Bedi, for instance, failed to come out of the narrow ivory shell of their personal superiority.

The leaders of the Lahore *Singh Sabha*, however, coming mostly as they did from the lower ranks of the Sikh society, endeavoured earnestly to promote homogeneity among the various castes and sub-castes of the Sikhs. They sought to foster the true spirit of Sikh brotherhood without any distinction of caste. Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Giani Ditt Singh, Bhai Mayya Singh and others, through press and platform, tried to awaken the Sikh consciousness to the need of abolition of the caste distinctions. Giani Ditt Singh, who wielded a powerful pen, abundantly reflected his burning passion for social equality through his writings. He emphatically declared, "Let each Sikh consider the other as his brother, not higher or lower, neither to be worshipped nor despised, but treated as equal as a member of the great Sikh brotherhood."¹⁰ In his book, *Nakli Sikh Parbodh* Ditt Singh tried to impress upon the Sikhs that all caste distinctions should be eliminated because they were not ordained by Sikh religion.¹¹

Bhai Gurmukh Singh also raised his voice against caste intolerance. In 1892, he founded Sikh Satsang, an association of Sikhs, comprising all castes and classes. At the weekly meetings of this association, Bhai Gurmukh Singh and his followers laid repeated emphasis on the principle of social equality. To ensure closer contacts and co-operation among various castes, inter-caste marriages were advocated.¹² Contemporary newspapers bear testimony to several instances of such marriages being organised between Aroras and Khatri, Jats

and non-Jats.¹³ Although some of the Bedis and the Sodhis were reluctant to shed airs of superiority and refused to mix up with the Sikhs of other castes, yet the endeavours of the Singh Sabha Lahore to unite the Sikhs in a fraternity were praiseworthy. The process of social equality initiated by these leaders was slow but sure. There was a gradual shift towards the liberalisation of caste rules.

Besides the elimination of caste distinctions, the removal of the curse of untouchability also formed an important part of the social programme of the Lahore Singh Sabha. Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Giani Ditt Singh and Babu Teja Singh Bhasaur took up the cause in all seriousness and by their eloquent pleadings did much to rouse the Sikh consciousness to the miserable plight of the low-caste Sikhs. The views of these leaders, expressed in their writings and speeches stirred the Sikh society to its depths and resulted in bitter controversies. Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Bhai Avtar Singh Vihiria and their followers, who represented the conservative section of the Singh Sabha, were not willing to shed off their prejudices against the low-caste Sikhs.¹⁴ Instead of helping their down-trodden brethren, these leaders favoured the *Mahants* and the *Pujaris* who did not grant equal rights and privileges to them. Even the Sikh *Zamindars*, especially those living in villages, did not support the views of the Lahore leaders for raising the status of the low-caste Sikhs. These *Zamindars* treated them as inferiors, so much so that they were not even allowed to fetch water from the wells used by the higher classes.¹⁵ A simple touch with low-caste Sikh necessitated a bath for purification, just as was the case in the Hindu society. Bingley observed, "A Sikh will take food cooked by any orthodox Hindu or by any other Sikh except a *Mazhabi*, *Chuhra* or *Chamar*. In theory Sikhism acknowledges no distinctions of caste, but in practice they are more or less admitted."¹⁶

The Lahore *Singh Sabha* carried a resolute struggle to secure a better social status for the low-caste Sikhs. The battle was long and tough but never did the leaders of the Lahore *Singh Sabha* waver even once from their chosen path of social justice and equality. Among the various measures adopted by them for this purpose was the popularization of the Sikh ceremony of *Amrit* (baptism) which made no distinction, whatsoever, between the

high and the low. Another device to achieve the same object was that after the meetings of the *Singh Sabhas*, low-caste Sikhs were asked to distribute *Karah Prasad* (holy pudding of the Sikhs) among the *Sangat* (religious congregation).¹⁷ This was done to inspire confidence among the low-caste Sikhs that they were in no way inferior to other members of the Khalsa brotherhood. Community meals (*langar*) were also useful for this purpose because there all people, high and low, sat together and had their meals. Such meals greatly helped in weakening the shackles of caste and other social barriers. A few instances are also found, in the contemporary newspapers, of marriages having taken place among the high and the low-caste Sikhs.¹⁸ Bhai Takhat Singh of Ferozepur set an example by marrying a girl from a low-caste family.

Giani Ditt Singh emphatically warned the Sikhs against the grave consequences arising out of the discriminatory attitude towards the low-caste Sikhs. He viewed with concern the proselytising activities of the *Arya Samaj*, the Muslim and Christian missionaries¹⁹, who were all trying hard to gain converts from the low-caste Sikhs by assuring them of a better social and economic status. The policy of *Shudhi* launched by the *Arya-Samaj* was a direct challenge to the *Singh Sabha*.²⁰ The Sikh leaders were greatly perturbed when in June, 1900, some *Arya Samaj* fanatics, at a largely attended meeting at Lahore, 'purified' some low-caste Sikhs and shaved their heads and beards in public. The Lahore Singh Sabha held protest meetings and tried to mobilise the Sikh community against the threat posed by the *Arya Samajists*. Bhagat Lakshman Singh And Mehr Singh established the *Khalsa Sudhar Sabha* at Lahore to counteract the aggressive activities of the *Arya Samaj*.²¹ The Sabha published much literature and sent several missionaries to villages and towns all over the province impressing upon the Sikhs to treat their low-caste brethren as equal.²²

To counteract the conversion of low-caste Sikhs to other faiths the *Singh Sabha* set up the Lahore *Shuddhi Sabha*. This Sabha was successful in reclaiming hundreds of converts who had gone over to Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.²³ With a view to making its campaign more effective, a magazine, *Shuddhi Pattar* was started by the Lahore *Shuddhi Sabha*.

The *Singh Sabha* leaders also took effective measures to ameliorate the economic condition of the low-caste Sikhs. They used their influence in securing better employment opportunities for them. In response to the various petitions submitted to the government by the *Singh Sabha* Lahore, the Government raised some regiments in the army where only the low caste Sikhs were recruited. The *Singh Sabha* also constituted a fund to grant concessions and scholarships to the children of the low-caste Sikhs studying in the Khalsa Schools and colleges.

The appreciable work done by the Lahore *Singh Sabha* for the uplift of the untouchables was continued by the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* under the leadership of Sunder Singh Majithia. The *Diwan* worked incessantly for the noble cause through its missionaries and conferences, held from time to time.²⁵ It aroused a new hope and consciousness among the low-caste Sikhs to assert for their rights. In 1920, the untouchables, the *Khalsa Biradri*²⁶ as they called themselves, organised a big *Diwan* at Amritsar, with the object of administering *Amrit* to its members. The Sikhs of all castes were invited to join. But the orthodox Sikhs refused to attend the *Diwan* and boycotted the organisers. True to the democratic traditions of the *Khalsa*, Sunder Singh Majithia and his colleagues along with the staff and students of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, joined the *Diwan* and helped in making it a great success.²⁷ The movement for *Achhut Udhar* (upliftment of untouchables) was started. Although much was left to be done, yet there was a lot of improvement in the social relationship of the high and the low-caste Sikhs.²⁸

The *Singh Sabha* also set in motion a vigorous campaign for the emancipation of women.²⁹ Better social status for women held the key to the progress of the society. Female infanticide, child-marriage, *Purdah* and polygamy were some of the practices which stood in the way of the progress of women. Prejudices against female education and widow-remarriage were also responsible for the inferior status of women. The Sikh Gurus had enjoined upon their followers to grant equal social status to women. But under the influence of Hinduism Sikh women had once again fallen to the position of servility, known as *Pair Di Jutti* (foot wear) which one could put on or discard at pleasure.³⁰ The *Singh Sabha* did commendable work in saving women from

the shackles of subservience. The spread of education and the influence of enlightened ideas of the West spurred the consciousness of the *Singh Sabha* leaders to revolt against age-old prejudices and practices which had led to the backwardness of women.

The *Singh Sabha* was the first movement among the Sikhs to take up the cause of female education at a time when a woman's ability to read or write was not considered to be a sign of respectability.³¹ The orthodox Sikhs viewed the education of women with suspicion. Baba Khem Singh Bedi was the first man in the Punjab to point out and stress the importance of female education. He impressed upon the Sikhs that educated daughters, wives and mothers were not only an asset to the family but also contributed to the enrichment of social life.³² The Baba opened many girls schools.³³ Bhai Takht Singh of Ferozepur was another champion of female education. The founding of *Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala* at Ferozepur was an eloquent testimony to the lifelong devotion and selfless service of this noble man.

The *Singh Sabha* leaders also launched a campaign for the removal of *purdah* which deprived women of their right to participate in the social and cultural life of the community.³⁴ The *Purdah* was considered to be the hallmark of respectability and honour among the high and middle-class Sikh families, as is shown by the following couplets current at that time :

“Andar Baithi Lakh di,³⁵
Bahar Gayi Kakh di.”

(The woman who lives indoors is worth lakhs, one who moves about is worthless).

“Trai Kam Kharab,
Mard nun chakki,
Sandhe nun garb,
Ran nun rah.”³⁶

(Three things are undesirable; grinding for a man, pregnancy for a bull and wandering for a woman).

The *purdah* system was not enjoined by the Sikh scriptures. It had crept into the Sikh society under the influence of the Hindus and the Muslims.³⁷ However, this custom was not observed by low-caste Sikh women because they had to assist

men in their economic pursuits. But the *purdah* system was so ingrained among the high and the middle class Sikh families that the *Singh Sabha* leaders, in the beginning, had to face a lot of opposition from the orthodox Sikhs.

Undeterred by opposition, Giani Ditt Singh, a man of indomitable spirit, was the first man to start a vigorous propaganda against the *purdah*. He brought home to the Sikhs that women had a vital role to play in making their social life healthy and wholesome.³⁸ He declared that all talk about the emancipation of women would be meaningless without the removal of the *purdah*. The *Singh Sabha* reformers emphasised complete equality of sexes and advocated the same type of baptism³⁹ for men as well as women, as enjoined by the Sikh religion.⁴⁰

Through their speeches and writings, the *Singh Sabha* leaders urged upon the Sikh women to come forward and take an active part in the cultural life of the society. In spite of the strong sentiments prevailing in favour of the *purdah*, many Sikh women played a significant role in the social activities of the *Singh Sabha*. Bibi Harnam Kaur wife of Bhai Takht Singh of Ferozepur, was an active member of the Ferozepur *Singh Sabha*. She did commendable work in the field of female education. Bibi Ripudaman Kaur, wife of Professor Puran Singh and Bibi Nand Kaur wife of Babu Teja Singh Bhasaur, were also active social workers. Bibi Ripudaman Kaur delivered speeches at the Sikh Educational Conferences urging Sikh women to march forward with them in the race of progress. A large number of Sikh women attended the annual sessions of the Sikh Educational Conferences.⁴¹ At the third Sikh Educational Conference held at Amritsar in March, 1910 there were six hundred women delegates from all over the country.⁴² As a result of the efforts of the *Singh Sabha* leaders, more and more Sikh women came forward to contribute their might for the enrichment of social life. A couplet popular at that time was, "Adha Aung Nar Nun Kahinde Sare Granth Pavitter Ne, Aurat Nun jo Juti Aakhan, Khud Vi Uh Ik Shitter Ne." (All the *Granth*s regarding woman as betterhalf are sacred; those who degrade her as footwear, are themselves the same).

In their bid to raise the status of women the *Singh Sabha* reformers also tried to mitigate the evil practice of female

infanticide among the Sikhs.⁴³ Although a law had come into force in 1870 whereby strict vigilance was kept over births and deaths, yet female infanticide was secretly practised.⁴⁴ It was reported by the Superintendent incharge of Census for Punjab for 1901 that "infanticide had not quite disappeared".⁴⁵ The *Sodhis* and *Bedis* of Ambala, Patiala, Hushiarpur and Nabha districts killed their female offsprings.⁴⁶ The *Bedis* were particularly known by the title of *Kurimar* (daughter slayers).⁴⁷ The custom had its origin in the false notion of superiority among the *Bedis* and *Sodhis* who, owing to their descent from the Sikh Gurus, deemed it humiliating to marry their daughters in the less holy families.⁴⁸ They protested against the official orders prohibiting them from killing their female children.⁴⁹ The *Jat-Sikhs* of Multan, Gujranwala, Jhelum and Amritsar also killed their daughters.⁵⁰ "The custom was very much in vogue among some tribes such as Sidhu, Sandhu, Gill, Dhillon, Dhariwal, etc. in the Punjab, especially in Ferozepur.⁵¹ If the boys and girls among them are counted, the small proportion of the latter to the former, would clearly prove prevalence of this inhuman practice. It is surprising that the Government has not yet adopted any effective measures to check it. Marriages generally involve heavy expenditure and this is the chief cause of the evil in question."⁵²

There were various ways by which the newly born girls were put to death. Quite often the infant was placed in a *ghara* (earthen waterpot) and buried in the ground. Some times the death was caused by administering opium or the juice of *Aak* plant (*calatropis gigantea*). In some cases the infant girl was buried with a morsel of *Gur* (a kind of countrymade sugar) and *puni* (twisted cotton) in her hand, to the accompaniment of the following recitation :—

"Gur khaen puni katen,
Aap na ayen bhaiyan ghallen."⁵³

(Eat *gur*, spin your thread, we don't want you but a brother instead).

The *Singh Sabha* reformers studied the causes which were responsible for this inhuman practice. They dissuaded the *Sodhis* and *Bedis* from indulging in this crime and emphasised the equality of sexes. They impressed upon the high caste Sikhs

not to consider it a humiliation to marry their daughters in the other castes. The *Singh Sabha* leaders condemned the dowry system due to which the girl was considered to be an economic burden on the family.⁵⁴ They made a strong plea to curtail extravagant expenditure on marriage ceremonies. As a result of the earnest efforts made by the *Singh Sabha* reformers, the custom of female infanticide largely disappeared among the Sikhs, by the beginning of the twentieth century.

The custom of polygamy and child-marriage prevalent at that time also tended to lower the status of women in the Sikh society. In the aristocratic Sikh families polygamy was widely practised.⁵⁵ This system was responsible for lowering the position of women. The constant threat of another marriage discouraged the wife from asserting her rights. The women were condemned to a life of torture and insults. Child-marriages were the order of the day.⁵⁶ Majority of the girls were married between the age of five and twelve, leaving no opportunity for their physical and mental development. They were deprived of the joys of girlhood. M. Fuller observed, "The girl child from the moment of her birth to her death undergoes one continuous life-long suffering as a child wife, as a child mother and very often as a child widow."⁵⁷ The plight of widows was even worse. They were not allowed to remarry and had to live a life of asceticism and perpetual agony.

The *Singh Sabha* reformers had to face the mighty task of moulding Sikh public opinion against polygamy and child marriage at a time when no legislation had been passed against these practices. They appealed to the Sikh intelligentsia to come forward and set an example by marrying not more than one wife. The abuses of child-marriage were also brought home to the Sikh masses through various tracts, speeches, articles and essays published in contemporary journals and newspapers. The *Khalsa Tract Society*, Amritsar, issued a tract, *Bal Bivah de Dukhere* (woes of child marriage), condemning child-marriage. The *Singh Sabha* leaders continued to agitate against polygamy and child marriage and their preachings served to change the public opinion and restrict these practices to a great extent.⁵⁸ However, these customs continued to prevail in the Sikh society until laws were passed prohibiting these evils.

The *Singh Sabha* leaders also espoused the cause of widows in right earnest.⁵⁹ They pleaded that the widows should be allowed to remarry if they chose to do so. Balwant Singh, President of the seventh Sikh Educational Conference, held at Jullundur in 1914, established a widow home, known as *Sardar Balwant Singh Istri Sahalk Vidayala*, where elementary education and vocational training was imparted to widows.⁶⁰ In 1908 another widow home, with thirty inmates, was opened at Amritsar. The institution did commendable work in ameliorating the condition of widows.⁶¹

Thus in respect of the position of women in the society, the *Singh Sabha* was able to effect changes of far-reaching importance by promotion of female education, introduction of widow remarriage, removal of *Purdah* and abolition of female infanticide, polygamy and child marriage.⁶² *Khalsa Istri Dharam Parcharak Sabha* Amritsar also did a lot to improve the social life of Sikh women. *Istri Satsang* and *Punjabi Bhain*, two contemporary periodicals started under the inspiration of the *Singh Sabha*, besides dealing with female education covered many social reform items concerned with the progress and emancipation of women. The *Khalsa Tract Society*, Amritsar also covered many topics relating to women's rights and duties in and outside the house.⁶³ It played an important role in eliminating illiteracy and superstitions. No wonder Sikh women had begun to steal a march over their Hindu and Muslim counterparts in the race of progress.⁶⁴

The movement of social reform started by the *Singh Sabha* was also directed against the removal of Brahmanical influences on the social life of the Sikhs.⁶⁵ The *Singh Sabha* represented at once a revolt against the social domination of the Brahmans and a bid for the restoration of Sikh rites and for the simplification of the social ceremonies. Due to a lack of consciousness of their separate identity, as distinguished from the Hindus, the social life of the Sikhs was governed by the Brahman priests.⁶⁶ The *Nirankari* and *Namdhari* movements had, no doubt, tried to mobilise public opinion against this but only limited results were achieved. The task of demarcating boundaries between the Hindu and the Sikh social laws was left to the *Singh Sabha*. In

1900 in the Dyal Singh Majithia Will Case, the Lahore High Court gave its verdict against Sardarni Dayal Singh stating that the Sikhs were governed by the Hindu Law of inheritance.⁶⁷ This made the Sikh apprehensive of losing their distinct social identity⁶⁸ and strengthened their resolve to shake off all alien influences on their social life.⁶⁹

The *Singh Sabha* brought about the much-needed transformation in the social outlook of the Sikhs by urging them to seek inspiration and guidance from their own scriptures. It launched a crusade to emancipate the Sikh mind from the authority of the Brahmans by denouncing all those rites and ceremonies which smacked of Hinduism. A spate of literature produced at this time drew the attention of the Sikhs to the intrusion of the Hindu social practices into the Sikh way of life. Bhai Avtar Singh wrote a book, *Khalsa Sudhar Taru*, in which he gave suggestions for improving the social life of the *Khalsa*.⁷⁰ Bhai Ram Singh wrote a booklet *Kitab Rasman Wa lag Chag*, dealing with the Sikh social ceremonies and making proposals for curtailing extravagance among Sikhs in rites relating to birth, marriage and death.⁷¹ Mehar Singh also wrote a pamphlet, *Je Ihi Hal Riha Tan Asi Dubbe*, in which he reflected strong concern about the social degradation of the Sikhs and lashed at the Hinduised Sikh ceremonies. Hukam Singh's book, *Panth Pukar*, was also a kind of social treatise making strong plea for the social uplift of the Sikhs. The *Khalsa Tract Society* Amritsar, *Sikh Tract Society* Lahore and the *Sikh Book Club* Peshawar too, apart from propagating the tenets of Sikh religion, did much appreciable work by issuing handy and cheap tracts stressing the need of simplicity, austerity and purity in social ceremonies and rituals as directed by the Sikh Gurus,

In 1915, the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* published *Gurmat Parkash Bhag Sanskar*, a well-known treatise on Sikh rituals and ceremonies covering the whole range of social life right from birth to death, as also the manner of their performance in accordance with the tenets of the Sikh faith. It took the Diwan full five years (1910-1915) to prepare this great work.⁷² The views and suggestions of all the renowned Sikh Gianis and organisations were invited, weighed, analysed and assimilated in order to enable the book to serve as a standard guide for future.⁷³

The social reform activity of the *Singh Sabha* had for its basis the basic tenets of Sikh faith.⁷⁴ "Sikhism, teaching as it does, the worship of one *Akal-Purakh*—unborn, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient and all prevading—it is natural that all Sikh rites must be based on this fundamental principle. They should involve the worship of one God, the gods and goddesses of Hindoo mythology should find no room in them. The present rites—notably the Hindoo rites—performed on the occasions of marriage, death and birth involve the worship, direct and indirect, of all sorts of good and evil spirits. Devout Sikhs naturally shun these and substitute in their place those rites in which the name of one Almighty Being is chanted and praised and lessons are taught to abide by His Holy Will."

The most spectacular achievement of the *Singh Sabha* in the field of social reform was the popularisation of the purely Sikh form of marriage. In spite of the best efforts made by the *Nirankaris* and the *Namdharis* to ensure an independent marriage ceremonial for the Sikhs, as distinguished from the Hindus, a large majority of the Sikh masses depended on the Brahmans to perform their marriages according to Hindu rites till as late as the last decade of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ There were certain legal hitches in their way. The Sikh form of marriage had not been recognised by law. This made the reformers' work very difficult. In the beginning the *Singh Sabha* too had to face some difficulty in convincing the people to switch over to the Sikh form of marriage as prescribed by their scriptures. The Sikh masses were rather slow to accept the new idea under the influence of past tradition. They quite often despised and ridiculed the *Singh Sabha* leaders when the latter attempted to plead the cause of *Anand* Marriage. Those who sided with the reformers were subjected to social boycott. Some aggressive Hindus went to the extent of questioning the validity of these marriages⁷⁷ on the plea that the Sikhs had no claim to have a separate social code.⁷⁸ In some quarters, mischievous propaganda was initiated that the off-spring of such marriages be declared as illegitimate.⁷⁹ The *Singh Sabha* leaders were all the more strengthened in their resolve to get the *Anand* Marriage legalised after Privy council judgement that "the Sikhs were governed by the Hindu Law."⁸⁰

Tikka Ripudaman Singh of Nabha, who was a member of

the Governor General's Council at that time, took the initiative and introduced the *Anand* Marriage Bill in the council in 1908. But some *Granthis* and *Pujaris* of Amritsar and some other misguided Sikhs raised a storm of controversy by sending petitions to the Government expressing their resentment over the Bill.⁸¹ This made the Government a little hesitant in giving effect to the Bill. Sir Louis Dane, the then Lt. Governor of the Punjab, said, "The experience gained in the controversy which has arisen over the measure shows how careful we must be not to take the public utterances of the reforming party as the opinion of the whole community."⁸²

In 1909, when Tikka Ripudaman Singh of Nabha was replaced by Sunder Singh Majithia in the Governor General's Council, he took it upon himself to get the proposed marriage bill passed into an act. He travelled all over the Panjab and conducted mass meetings to organise Sikh public opinion in favour of the bill. The response was quite enthusiastic. Various Sikh organisations and *Singh Sabhas* sent telegrams and petitions signed by lacs of Sikhs demanding the passage of the bill.⁸³ The Government was impressed by this demonstration of Sikh unity and the *Anand* Marriage Bill was passed on October 22, 1909. Sir Sankaran Nair, who was a member of the Governor General's Executive Council, suggested that provisions against polygamy, child-marriage and divorce be included in the law.⁸⁴ But Sunder Singh Majithia did not agree to this as he deemed it wise not to antagonise the Sikh orthodoxy at this time. He pleaded that the law, which was meant for all Sikhs, should not raise any controversies and that enlightenment and education would gradually bring the required change in the social outlook of the Sikhs. 'Brahmo Marriage Act' passed much earlier, in 1872, had sanctioned widow-remarriage and had made provisions against child-marriage and polygamy. Unlike the Brahmo Samajists, *Singh Sabha* leaders wanted to adopt a cautious policy in this connection.

The passing of the *Anand* Marriage Act was a decisive victory of the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* over all those who tried to put obstacles in the way of reform. The *Anand* form of marriage, which is performed by circumambulating the *Granth* attracted wide popularity. Very soon it began to be universally practised by the Sikhs all over the world.

The *Singh Sabha* also made efforts to eradicate social abuses such as gambling, drinking,⁸⁵ litigation and smoking prevalent among the Sikhs, especially in the rural areas. A contemporary Englishman noted that 'the Sikhs were determined drunkards and inordinate devourers of opium. Unlimited indulgence in these two vices rendered them liable to a multitude of ailments during life and almost always superinduced a premature death.'⁸⁶ The *Singh Sabha* leaders were perturbed at this state of affairs and launched a vigorous drive against all these social evils which hampered the progress of the society. The Sikh leaders preached against gambling and litigation and advocated abstinence from the use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages, which were strictly prohibited by the Sikh Gurus.

The *Singh Sabha* published lots of literature condemning these evils. Bhai Jawahar Singh vehemently propagated against drinking and gambling by writing booklets, such as *Jhok Sharabian Di* (evil effects of drinking) and *Git Jawariya Di Istri Da Virlap* (depicting the wretched life of a gambler's wife). Gulab Singh Bakshi wrote a pamphlet, *Gurmat Vikhyan Nashon Ka Khandan*, in which he supported his arguments against intoxicants by quoting from the Sikh scriptures. Bhai Natha Singh wrote a booklet, *Huqqe di Vichar*, in which he made a strong appeal for the abandonment of tobacco and other intoxicants by the Sikhs. The *Khalsa Tract Society* issued tracts covering various items of social reform like, *Jue Bazi* (gambling), *Bikhuja Nikhedan* (condemnation of intoxicants) and *Jo Patti Suadon Patti* (Self indulgence is ruinous). Besides, the *Singh Sabha* sent *Pracharks* (preachers) and *Ragi Jathas* (reciters of devotional music) to carry the spirit of reform to every nook and corner of the country. Sant Attar Singh Mastuana, Bhai Hira Singh Ragi and Sant Sangat Singh of Kamalia exercised strong influence on the public opinion in favour of the reforms initiated by the *Singh Sabha*. Many articles appeared in the contemporary news papers in which the Sikh leaders stressed the need of reforms in the society. Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid, in 1906, started a monthly newspaper, *Dukh Nivaran*, which contained "useful information about health and hygiene, home and its problems and many other problems bearing on modern life."⁸⁷

Economic betterment of the society also attracted the atten-

tion of the *Singh Sabha* leaders at this time. With this aim in view, the Punjab and Sind Bank was established in 1903 at Amritsar.⁸⁸ Tarlochan Singh, a well-known economist, was the guiding force of this institution.⁸⁹ This bank did commendable work for the Sikhs in general and Sikh institutions in particular at a time when Sikh banking and trading companies hardly existed.⁹⁰ Even today the bank enjoys great prestige in the banking world and has business dealings of about fifty crores rupees every year.

The *Singh Sabha* also undertook charitable works for the welfare of the weaker sections of the community. It was the first movement among the Sikhs to undertake organised philanthropic work. The inspiration for this was derived from Christian missionaries and such Indian movements as *Arya Samaj*, *Brahmo Samaj*, *Dev Samaj* and *Rama Krishna Mission*.⁹¹ In 1904 the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* opened the Central Khalsa Orphanage at Amritsar "for the fatherless and motherless children of the *Panth* which, being uncared for and unattended to, had to seek refuge in the *Arya*, *Yatimkhanas* (Orphanages) where, bereft of Sikh atmosphere, they were sure to bid adieu to their beloved faith."⁹² Besides preparing the children for earning their livelihood by imparting training in tailoring, handling the weaving loom and printing works, religious instruction and music formed an important part of curriculum at this institution. Sunder Singh Majithia, till the end of his life, paid special attention to the development of the orphanage. Later on an *Ashram* (asylum) for the blind was attached to this institution by Bhai Vir Singh.⁹³ The *Garjakh Singh Sabha* also took the initiative to establish a Khalsa Orphanage at Gujranwala in March, 1904. The management of the institution was entrusted to the *Khalsa Updeshak School*. In 1908, another orphanage, known as the *Khalsa Yateem Khanna*, was established at Shikarpur (Sindh), on the same pattern.

Another institution standing to the credit of the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* was the establishment of the Central Khalsa Hospital at Tarn Taran in 1917.⁹⁴ The hospital was founded by Dr. Harnam Singh, a great philanthropist. Even today the hospital may rightly claim to be one of the well-known and well-equipped hospitals of the Punjab.

The work done by the *Singh Sabha* movement in the field of social reform, stands unrivalled in modern Sikh history. It made the Sikhs, not only aware of their distinct social identity but also set the ball rolling for the eradication of social evils. A new life began to pulsate in the Sikh community. The path of social reform was, no doubt, long and there were hurdles in the way. The reformers had to struggle hard to remove the deep rooted caste prejudices. Reluctance of the upper classes to shed airs of superiority often, made the task of reformers difficult. On some of the issues like polygamy and plight of widows, the *Singh Sabha* reformers had to adopt a cautious line for the fear of offending strong and influential Sikh society. The hostility of the *Mahants* and *Pujaris* towards the *Singh Sabha* ideology⁹⁴ and the opposition of the Hindus towards the social ceremonies of the Sikhs, made the pace of reform rather slow. All the same, it goes to the credit of the *Singh Sabha* movement, that it accomplished this task fairly well.

Unlike the *Namdharis*, the *Singh Sabha* leaders thankfully acknowledged the advantages offered to them by the British civilization and urged the Sikhs to join their countrymen in seeking to assimilate the merits of western thought and scholarship. They rightly felt that the prejudice against western ideas had stood in the way of the progress of the community in the past. The *Namdharis* had gone to the extent of boycotting not only the modern education but also posts, telegraphs and railways. On the other hand, the *Singh Sabha* leaders extolled the merits of the western institutions for bringing about these innovations. This sense of appreciation is reflected in the various publications of the *Singh Sabha*. The *Sabha* leaders realised the necessity of adopting all that was best in the western thought, without impairing the essence of Sikhism. They sought to regenerate society imbibing in due measure modern western ideas and moulding their thoughts and policies in the context of changed circumstances. Thus there was an inspiration from outside and an urge from within which led the *Singh Sabha* leaders to undertake the tremendous task of reconstruction of the socio-religious structure on the new lines. The new trend represented a combination of revivalism and revolt. It was a revival of old Sikh institutions and practices, thereby preserving the distinct identity

of the '*Khalsa*'. On the other hand, it was a revolt in the sense that it advocated the rejection of out-moded customs which were hindering the progress of the Sikh society.

The *Singh Sabha* leaders aimed at restoring the purity of the Sikh faith without any philosophy of their own. Any sikh, who adhered to the injunctions of the ten Gurus and was ready to serve the community, could be admitted to the fold of the *Singh Sabha*. There was no ceremony to be gone through for this purpose nor was there any distinctive dress, *badge* or mark to be worn. Despite the efforts made by men like Baba Khem Singh Bedi to style themselves as Gurus, the *Singh Sabha* did not succumb to the cult of Gurudom. Previous reform movements among the Sikhs, the *Nirankari* and the *Namdhari*, had assumed a schismatic character mainly because they could not do away with the institution of Gurudom.

Another distinguishing feature of the *Singh Sabha* movement was that it was more democratic in character than any other contemporary movement. The *Arya Samaj*, the *Brahmo Samaj*, the *Rama Krishna Mission*, the *Wahabi* and the *Ahmadiya* movements all derived their inspiration from their respective founders. In each case one individual leader was the guiding authority and his word was the law. The same had been the case with the *Nirankari* and the *Namdhari* movements. The *Singh Sabha*, on the other hand, was a mass upsurge. It retained its democratic character, despite the efforts of the Amritsar leaders to wield absolute control over its affairs. It had the unique distinction of not being founded by any single individual and as such it was free from the drawbacks of the personality cult. This also accounts for the greater popularity of the *Singh Sabha* movement than the previous reform movements of the Sikhs. The comparative study of the *Singh Sabha* and its counterpart *Arya Samaj* among the Hindus reveals that the latter's response among the Hindus was not as overwhelming as that of the former among the Sikhs. The *Singh Sabha* leader's deliberately chose to remain aloof from politics, as their main concern was the socio-religious reconstruction of the Sikh society. They took care to avoid clash with the Government, because that would have hindered the pace of social reform. But the awakening brought about by the *Singh Sabha* movement became a potent factor in the rise of the

Akalis. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the *Singh Sabha* movement became the necessary precursor of the *Akali* movement. In the words of Jogendra Singh, "It was due to the *Singh Sabha* movement and its success in bringing back the community to the source of its spiritual strength that the *Khalsa* again gained in purity and in power and displayed its will to sacrifice and to suffer in the *Gurdawara* movement."⁹⁵ Even Master Tara Singh admitted that the *Akalis* had no basic differences with the *Singh Sabha* and that it was unjust to brand the *Singh Sabha* leaders as 'toadies' (*Jholi Chuk*).⁹⁶ The inward motivation of both the *Singh Sabha* and the *Akali* movements was religious zeal, but whereas the outward manifestation of the *Singh Sabha* movement was more socio-religious than political, that of the *Akalis* was as much political as religious. Like the Sikh Gurus who had first rebelled against the social and religious trammels of Hindu orthodoxy, before they revolted against the political domination of the Muslims, the Sikhs under the leadership of the *Singh Sabha* first fought against the religious and social supremacy of the Brahmanical Hinduism, before they engaged themselves in political struggle under the leadership of the *Akalis*.

To sum up the achievements of the *Singh Sabha* movement it attempted five tasks and in each of them achieved a large measure of success. These five tasks may be mentioned as (i) reorientation and modernization of Sikh outlook by means of eradication of their unreasonable superstitions and false taboos, (ii) reinforcement of Sikh identity, (iii) regeneration of dominant Sikh spirit and reinvigoration of their community, (iv) rekindling of Sikh national sentiments and (v) democratization of Sikh religious and social institutions by substitution of *Panthic* (collective) Leadership for Gurudoms. In view of such impressive attainments, it is no exaggeration to say that the debt the modern Sikh society owes to the *Singh Sabha* movement is not excelled by any other Sikh movements of the modern period.

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2. *Selections from the Records of the Government of India* (Foreign Department) No. XI.

3. "The caste-system, for the abolition of which our Gurus had to suffer so much, for the blowing up of which they had to sacrifice themselves and their all, unfortunately still exists amongst us. And I can boldly say that this baneful system has been at the base of all our degradation whether religious, moral, social or political." *The Khalsa*, Lahore, March 14, 1900.
4. The Panjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 also created a marked split between the Jat and non-Jat Sikhs, For details see Narang, G. C. *Transformation of Sikhism* (Lahore 1946), p. 357
5. *The Khalsa*, Lahore, March 14, 1900.
6. *The Khalsa*, Lahore, June 6, 1900.
7. "The Sikh has fallen away from his original faith, in his reverence for the Brahman and his observance of caste rules he differs only in degree from his Hindu neighbour", *Report of the Census of Punjab*, 1881, p. 112.
8. "It is remarkable that caste distinctions should have lingered in these people, for Sikhs, is opposed to such differences, and the founders of that religion made a special effort to obliterate social invidiousness from the ranks of their followers. However, in their degenerate days caste prejudices have asserted themselves among the Sikhs. A strong effort is now being made by progressive members of the community to wipe out the differences." Nihal Singh, Saint, *India's Fighters' Their Mettle, History and Services to Britain* (London 1914), p. 64.
9. Hira Singh Nara, Panjab Rattan Baba Khem Singh Sahib (Delhi 1972), p. 89
10. *Khalsa Akhbar*, Lahore, June 4, 1889.
11. Ditt Singh, Giani, *Nakli Sikh Prabodh* (Lahore 1895). pp. 6-8.
12. "The whole Sikh community is just like a family. So the Sikhs should rise above petty caste considerations and should not believe in any sects or sub-castes while arranging marriages." *Khalsa Akhbar*, Lahore, February 23, 1900.
13. "A detailed report of the Khalsa Diwan, Pothohar has just been published. Out of its contents two things deserve particular mention. The first and the most important is the performance of marriages regardless of caste restrictions by members of the Sikh Society. Several betrothels according to Sikh rites were made on the occasion, the parties concerned being converts from different castes, This is a movement which seems in the right direction, and we hope that the Sikhs would steadily but carefully work out their way from the trammels of caste system *The Khalsa Advocate*, Amritsar, February 22, 1905.
14. Hira Singh Nara, Op. cit., pp. 289-295.
15. *The Khalsa*, Lahore, June 6, 1900.
16. Bingley, A. H., *Sikhs* (Simla 1899), p. 76.
17. "In the meeting of the Singh Sabha Lahore a Rahitia Sikh, named Pratap Singh, was asked to distribute the *Karah Prashad* and we are glad to announce that this was done and the Sikhs of all the ranks and

grades wiled with one another in taking *Karah Prashad*." *The Khalsa*, Lahore, June 6, 1900.

18. "From Lyallpur it was reported that Mazhabis and Jats were beginning to dine together and a preacher of the society, a Khatri Sikh of Lahore named Ranbir Singh, married a mazhabi widow," Petrie, D., *Memorandum on Recent Developments in Sikh Politics* (Simla 1911), taken from the *Panjab Past and Present* (Patiala 1970) Vol. II, Part ii, P. 319.
19. In this connection, the remarks of Mr. Edye, the Census Commissioner of India, 1921, are noteworthy. "The appeal of Christianity (in so far as it succeeds in obtaining converts) is to the person who can hope for nothing from his own community and sees in the Christian community a means for bettering his status and character of his life, while the material benefits offered by the missions in the shape of education, medical relief and general interest in the welfare of their flock are by no means small incentives." (*Census of India, 1921*, Vol. I, p. 117.
20. Lakshman Singh Bhagat, *Autobiography* (Calcutta 1965), pp. 164-65.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-66
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. Teja Singh and Nanak Singh, Bhai, *Silver jubilee Book* (Amritsar, 1935), p. 32.
25. Sahni, Ruchi Ram, *The Gurdawara Reform Movement and the Sikh Awakening* (Jullundur 1922), pp. 150-51.
26. "During 1907 there was founded in Amritsar a society known as the Khalsa Biradri which has as its object the levelling up of class distinctions in the way of inter-dining and inter-marrying and which advocates the reception into the Sikh brotherhood of all persons of whatever class who were previously included in Sikhism". Petrie, D., *op. cit*; p. 319
27. Chief Khalsa Diwan, *Fifty Years of Service* (Amritsar 1952) p. 13
28. Figures of Sikh Chuharas and Mazhabis registered in the districts of Ferozepore and Amritsar suggests that untouchables are being fast absorbed into Sikhism as the result of the efforts of Sikh preachers." *Census of India 1921* (Punjab and Delhi) part I, Vol. XV, p. 184
29. "The Sikhs are beginning to feel the drawbacks of their social institutions. Out of all of them, the degraded position of their women requires particular attention and reformation." *The Khalsa Advocate Amritsar*, April 22, 1906.
30. "Our women have lost the little liberty and elevation of social position which they secured through the benign influence of Sikhism and are once more brought down to the position of *Shudras* and slaves like Hindu women." *The Khalsa*, Lahore, March 14, 1900.
31. For details see *Infra* pp
32. Hira Singh Nara, *Op. cit*, Pp. 267-68
33. *Ibid.*

34. "It is a pity that even the educated among us (Sikhs) consider it a means of pride to keep their better halves in *Purdah*. Alas in this way their brains and bodies both remain undeveloped." *The Sikhs and Sikhism*, Gujranwala, July 16, 1904.
35. *District Gazetteer*, Multan, 1901-01, P. 98
36. Ibid.
37. "If we do not mistake, *purdah* came in this country with the advent of Mohamadans, the Hindu copied them and injected the simple-hearted Khalsa who were unaware of the evils of much mixing with them. Now the things have come to such a pass that if a Sikh comes to see another Sikh at the latter's home, he is made to wait at the door till the female of the house manages to hide herself in some corner." *The Sikhs and Sikhism*. Gujranwala, July 16, 1904.
38. *Khalsa Akhbar*, Lahore, January 3, 1896.
39. "Sikh baptism is obligatory for women as well as for men. For both the rules of conduct are identical. They worship in the same temples, and congregations are always mixed, brothers and sisters sitting side by side singing the praise of the Most High." Jodh Singh, Bhai, *A Paper on Sikhism* (Amritsar 1910). P. 10.
40. "After taking *Amrita* women should not yield to superstitions such as keeping *purdah* and wearing masque. When the doctrines of our religion enjoin upon men and women both to cultivate brotherly and sisterly feelings as much as they can, why should we then transgress our religion by shutting our females out of our society." *The Sikhs and Sikhism*, Gujranwala, July 16, 1904.
41. Commenting on the Sikh Educational Conference held at Jullundur, in 1913, a contemporary observer noted as follows: "Apart from the resolutions passed and funds collected, the value of the meeting from the social point of view was also very considerable; in fact, that was the most important part of the whole function. Religious services in the morning, interdining in the evening and social gatherings at all hours of the day were quite as successful as the main session itself. The free mingling of both the sexes was another feature and the day did not seem far off when emancipation of the Sikh ladies was to be as complete as among the other civilised nations of the world." Sardul Singh Caveeshar, *Sikh Studies* (Lahore 1937), pp. 128-29
42. Gurbax Singh, Bhai (ed.) *Ditt Singh Magazine*, Ropar April 15, 1910.
43. "The country (Panjab) was still suffering from the effects of female infanticide. "The First Census of Panjab, 1855 A report published in the *Journal of the Punjab Historical Society* (December 1935), Vol IV, Part II
44. "This is evident from the fact that in 1891 the proportion of females among the Sikhs was only 784 per thousand, which was the lowest number as compared to the other communities in the Punjab where Sikhs predominated." *Census of India 1921* 1921, Vol. XV, Part I p. 227.

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46. Browne, J. C., *Indian Infanticide* (London 1857), p. 71.
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50. *Hushiarpur District Gazetteer* Vol. XI A, Lahore. 1904, p. 31
51. Female infanticide probably accounted for the low proportion of females among the Jat Sikhs.
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53. *Hushiarpur District Gazetteer*, 1883-84, p. 40.
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55. *Panth Khalsa Diwan Gujranwala Da Mahavari Parcha*, July-August, 1910
56. *Khalsa Samachar*, Amritsar, May 1, 1900
57. Fuller, M, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood* (New York 1900), p. 33.
58. "The Sikhs marry later than the Hindus and their widows freely remarry." *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. I, Part I,
59. Mohan Singh Vaid, Bhai, *Vidhwa Vilap* (Amritsar 1918) Pp. 4-6
60. Chief Khalsa Diwan, *Golden Jubilee Book* (Amritsar 1958) P. 18
61. Farquhar, J. N. *Modern Religious Movements in India* (London, 1929), p. 404
62. Mohan Singh Vaid, Bhai, *Abla Vilap* (Tarn Taran 1918), pp. 10-15 Also Mohan Singh Vaid, Bhai, *Subhag Kaur* (Tarn Taran 1912), pp 22-23.
63. Khalsa Tract Society, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-20.
64. "The tide of female education has timely set in and ladies, Diwans are now held, almost every where, along with few annual celebrations of the Singh Sabhas" *The Khalsa Advocate*, April 22, 19
65. In weddings and on other domestic occasions the Hindu ritual is followed by the Sikhs." *Report of the Census of Punjab*, 1881, p. 137.
66. "Nearly all Sikh villagers reverence and make use of the Brahmans almost as freely as do their Hindu neighbours." *Ibid.* P. 112.
67. In this case Dayal Singh's widow claimed that the transfer of Dayal Singh's ancestral property to a trust was invalid, on the plea that the late Sardar was a Sikh. Hence the Hindu Law of inheritance should not be applicable to it.
68. *The Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, April, 15, 1903 wrote, "The present position of Sikhism as a social force is, as we think, also

unsatisfactory. It is in the danger of losing its great distinctive features and merging into the dead level of its surroundings, and perhaps in a generation or two, it will only survive like the camer-
onians in the title of a few historical regiments."

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71. Ram Singh, Bhai, *Kitab Rasman Wa Tag Chag* (Amritsar 1899), Pp. 2-6
72. Chief Khalsa Diwan, *Gurmat Parkash Bhag Sanskar* (Amritsar 1915), Preface pp. 1-2.
73. Ibid.
74. "In order to cultivate brotherly feelings with one another and help one another on occasions of *Gurmaryada* (Performance of marriage, death and birth ceremonies according to Sikh rites), the Sikhs should join in common brotherhood and name it *Khalsa Bradri*. *The Sikhs and Sikhism*, Gujranwala, April 16, 1904.
75. *The Khalsa Advocate*, Amritsar September 20, 1903
76. "The Sikh marriages were in the past celebrated according to the ordinary Hindu rites, performed by the Brahmans with the difference that hymns of the fourth Guru, known as *Lawan* were sung simultaneously by the female during the ceremony in place of Hindu songs. Later on a dual ceremony was adopted whereby the Hindu rites were gone through first and then the wedded couple circumambulated the Granth Sahib four times while the Sikh priest read the 'Lawan' mentioned above," *Punjab Census Report 1911*, Quoted in *Amritsar District Gazetteer*, 1914, pp. 30-31
77. *The Khalsa*, Lahore, September 20, 1899.
78. *Arya Gazette*, Lahore, in its issue, dated August 24, 1899, wrote, "All the Sikh Gurus believed in the Vedas, The mission of their life was to preach the grandeur of the Vedas and to protect the Arya Dharma. Those of Gurus, whose marriages took place after their ascension to the *Gaddis* were married with *Vedic Mantras* and *Havan*. The Gurus married their sons also with Vedic Mantras. But bewitched by the light of the new civilisation and false partiality or Panth some unthinking Sikhs are dishonouring the Vedas in a most provoking manner. At the time of marriage, boys and girls are married into wedlock by the recitation of verses in Punjabi. Is it not time for the believers in the Vedic faith to consider whether such marriages should be regarded lawful by the society, as also whether we should be present at marriages at which instead of the Divine knowledge, poetry of human composition is sung."
79. Kartar Singh Updeshak, Bhai, *Panthak Unati de Pichle Itihas Vichon Kuchh Abhul Yadan* (New Delhi 1955), p. 55
80. Natrajan, S., op. cit., p. 132
81. Talwar, K. S. *The Anand Marriage Act, The Punjab Past and Present* (October 1968), Vol. II, Part ii, pp. 406-7
82. Quoted by S. Natrajan in his book, *A Century of Social Reform in*

India (Bombay 1962), p. 132

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84. Natrajan, S; op. cit; pp. 132-33
85. Symth, G. Carmichael, *The Seik Soldiers and their Sardars* (Calcutta 1847), p. 63
86. Quoted by Sadhu Singh in his book, *Sada Hal* (Amritsar 1878) P. 21
87. Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism* (Lahore 1944), p. 140.
88. Chief Khalsa Diwan, *Fifty Years of Service* (Amritsar 1922), p. 15.
89. Ibid
90. Ibid
91. "If the movement (for philanthropic work) be allowed to fail for want of pecuniary support, many a young member of the Sikh nation will fall in the hands of *Anmatis*. Brethern; What duty do you perform as Sikhs when for an indifference on your part hundreds of your co-religionists will be compelled by indigency to sleep in the lap of Christ, surely you and you alone will be held responsible for the conversion of a great number of your brethern into Arya Samaj, if you love money and do not spend it in support of national undertakings." *The Sikhs and Sikhism, Gujranwala*, Oct. 16, 1904.
92. Chief Khalsa Diwan, *Fifty Years of Service* (Amritsar 1952) p. 15.
93. Ibid, pp. 16-17
94. Ibid; pp. 19-20
95. See details the, *Pettition submitted by the Granthis and Pujaris to the Lt. Governor of Punjab*, Quoted in Appendix 'C' of the unpublished Ph. D. Thesis of Gurdarshan Singh, '*Singh Sabha* (Punjabi University Patiala 1973)
96. Jogendra Singh, *The Miracle of Sikhism* (Lahore n. d.) p. 15
97. Tara Singh, Master, quoted Bhai Kartar Singh Updeshak in his book, *Panthak, Unti De Pichle Itihas Vichon Kijh Abhul Yadan* (New Delhi 1955) P. 5

SIKH PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATIONAL VALUES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

DR. T. S. SODHI

Education, has a definite role to play in the process of social change, which will have to be planned and engineered in such a way that the people adopt to the constantly changing society and culture. At the same time education is also to keep a watch that the social change is not slowed down by transmitting values which are irrelevant to contemporary society, but also to make people imbibe those values, which are relevant and permanent in nature. Whatever, may be the point of view of different, philosophical thoughts about education, the fact remains that education is to do aculturation, socialisation and to cultivate spiritual, moral, social and ethical values. All these facts have been properly and relevantly understood by Sikh-Gurus. It is why that Sikh Gurus were able to bring about such a huge change in the masses that all those who were practically so much depressed that they were living only at animal level, without any social, cultural, human and respectable status, became so well built up in their personality patterns, that they not only constituted a society which was based on value system but practically finished the Mughal Empire which had created tyranny and religious dogmas.

There is no denying the fact that this point was quite well understood by the Sikh Gurus, who engineered the social and cultural change amongst the masses and created a sect of people, who later on came to be known as Sikhs and who even today feel proud of adopting the value system. A bird's-eye view of the methodology of bringing about the social change, in the masses along with the adoption of the values, which are permanent and higher, will make the process clear. Undoubtedly the methodology used was educative, but the process of

education was not confined to the forewalls of society but extended in non-formal way to 'satsangs', 'mangies', 'piri's' 'congrigations', 'sangar', 'pangar', 'gurmata's', 'simran', 'kirtan', 'katha', 'langar', setting of moral and ethical value oriented examples' by their own mode of living, breaking the barriers of religious dogmas, dismantling of caste system, bringing about social mobility, national unity and above all treating man as a man rather than a person having a specific faith. The beauty lies in the fact that even when Sikh Gurus used education as a tool to bring the social change and at the same time cultivated ethical, moral, spiritual and religious values, they did not allow the process of change to slow down as has been the fear with Hodgkinson (1962) when he said : "On the other hand, the school has been entrusted with the transmission of values of the past, which may not be relevant to contemporary events, and the transmission of these values and norms to the students will undoubtedly slow down the process of social change" It was possible by Sikh Gurus to do so by way of picking up those values for the purpose of cultivation, which were rather of permanent nature and unbreakably tied with the human culture.

In order to understand the relevance of the above process, in which this strategy was so beautifully adopted, one is to refer to the age of Sikh Gurus and to see how they worked at such a value system which, not only solved the social and cultural problems of their times, but portrayed a wisdom which gives an insight to solve such problems even in the present context.

Times of Sikh Gurus

Sikh Gurus lived at a time when there was political instability, social backwardness, cultural lag, administrative corruption, moral degradation, factual illusion, religious dogmas, spiritual ignorance, human hatred, mass suppression and economic, social, moral and cultural bankruptcy. This has been beautifully described by Nanak himself;

ਕਲਿ ਕਾਤੀ ਰਾਜੇ ਕਾਸਾਈ ਧਰਮੁ ਪੰਥ ਕਰਿ ਉਡਰਿਆ ॥

ਕੂੜੁ ਅਮਾਵਸ ਸਚੁ ਚੰਦ੍ਰਾ ਦੀਸੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹ ਚੜਿਆ ॥

"The age is like butcher's, knife,
rulers themselves are butchers,
righteousness has taken wings,
pitch darkness of falsehood prevails the
light of truth is no where visible."

A. G. P. 145

This situation seems to be comparable with the situation which prevails in India, these days. Sikh Gurus had a huge task before them, but they were able to solve the problems so intelligently that even today when the social, economic, political and administrative situation is comparable with that age, educationists, philosophers, sociologists and administrators can draw a clue from it and find solution to their problems.

Educational Values of Sikhs

In order to bring the social change Sikh Gurus first of all did away with the social stratification, in which Hindus and Muslims lived poles apart, different castes of Hindus divided the Hindu culture, where rich and poor were extreme distinct. Jogies exploited the masses and above all the women folk were not only ill treated but considered sub-human.

(a) Hindu Muslim Unity

For bringing Hindu Muslim unity, Sikh Gurus gave the concept of 'Ik Onkar' i.e. God is one.

ਜਹ ਦੇਖਾ ਤੂ ਸਭਨੀ ਥਾਈ ॥

"Oh God I see Thee alone where ever I see"

A.G.P. 1052

Again

ਜੀਅ ਜੋਤ ਸਭਿ ਤਿਸ ਦੇ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਸੋਈ ।

ਮੰਦਾ ਕਿਸਨੇ ਆਖੀਐ ਜੇ ਦੂਜਾ ਹੋਈ ॥

"All belong to Thee, O Lord, Thou Belongest to all, whom shall we call bad, when there's none without Thee"

A G.P. 425

Again to say :

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

ਤਿਸ ਦੇ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

“It is the same spirit that pervadeth all, It is this light which illuminates everything.” A.G.P. 13

He educated Muslims to be true Muslim and Said :

ਪੰਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ, ਵਖਤ ਪੰਜਿ ਪੰਜਾ ਪੰਜੇ ਨਾਉ ॥
ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਚ ਹਲਾਲ ਦੁਇ ਤੀਜਾ ਖੈਰ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥
ਚਉਥੀ ਨੀਅਤਿ ਰਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ ਪੰਜਵੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਨਾਇ ॥
ਕਰਣੀ ਕਲਮਾ ਆਖਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸਦਾਇ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇਤੇ ਕੂੜਿਆਰ ਕੂੜੈ ਕੂੜੀ ਪਾਇ ॥

Five prayers, five times a day, with five different names, Makes the first prayer truth, the second to lawfully earn your daily bread, the third charity in the Name of God, fourth purity of mind and let good deeds be your article of faith, the Kalmas. Then you can call yourself truly Muslem. By the practice of hypocrisy, Nanak, A man is deemed false through and Through”

A.G.P. 141

To the Hindus, he made these values clear and inspired them to attain higher values

ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਖਿੰਥਾ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਡੰਡੈ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਭਸਮ ਚੜਾਈਐ ॥
ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਮੂੰਦੀ ਮੂੰਡਿ ਮੁਡਾਇਐ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਸਿੰਛੀ ਵਾਈਐ ॥
ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਜੋਗੁ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

“Asceticism does not lie in the ascetic roles, nor in the walking staff, nor in the ashes, Asceticism does’nt lie in ear ring, nor in the shaven head, nor in blowing a conch, Asceticism lies in remaining pure amongst impurities.”

A.G.P. 730

Sikh Gurus not only built up the building of Hindu Muslim unity but plastered it with their actions by including the *Bani* of Sufies like Baba Farid in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* by getting the foundation of Golden Temple laid by Mian Mir and by visiting Macca and educating the quasis and pandits alike. Guru Nanak visited all the Hindu tirths also and discussed his theory of ethics with them.

Condemnation of Caste System

Sikh values condemned the caste system and preached

equality of all :

ਫਕੜ ਜਾਤੀ ਫਕੜ ਨਾਉ ॥
ਸਭਨਾ ਜੀਆ ਇਕ ਛਾਉ ॥

“Vain is the pride of caste, Vain the pride of glory
The lord alone gives shade to all” A.G.P. 83

Again they said :

ਜਾਤਿ ਕਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਨ ਕਰੀਅਹੁ ਕੋਈ ॥
ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਿਦੇ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਹੋਈ ॥

“Be not proud of thy caste, for he alone is Brahmin
who knowth Brahman the only God” —A.G.P. 1128

Again they wrote :

ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪਤਿਆ ਉਤਮ ਪਦਵੀ ਪਾਇ ॥
ਪਛਹੁ ਬਿਦਰ ਦਾਸੀ ਸੁਤੈ ਕਿਸਨੁ ਉਤਰਿਆ ਘਰਿ ਜਿਸੁ ਜਾਇ ॥

“Contemplating the Lord, men of low caste attained
high status; Pray, ask thou Vidura, the son of slave
girl, with whom Krishna chose to abide”

—A.G.P. 733

So much so that Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus happily
linked themselves with the low castes :

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸੁ ॥

“The lowest of the lowely, the lowest of the low born,
Nanak seek their company, the freindship of the
Great is in Vain.” A.G.P. 15

Sikh Gurus did not try to bring this change only by their
writings, but did so in their actions, by giving them respectable
Place in Guru Granth Sahib. He entered the Bani of Ravidas
the shoe maker, Sadhna the bucher & Namdev the Chhimba in
Adi Granth. Guru Gobind Singh honoured them by saying

ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੇ ਸਜੇ ਹਮ ਹੈਂ
ਨਹੀ ਮੈ ਸੋ ਗਰੀਬ ਕਰੋੜ ਪਰੇ ॥

“Whatever I am, I am because of Them
Otherwise there are million and million like me”

Sidh Goshti

Guru Nanak not only did Sidh Goshti with Sidhs and showed them the right path but persuaded them to come to the main stream and to work for the human welfare and social change and told them :

ਜੈਸੈ ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਕਮਲੁ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਮੁਰਗਾਈ ਨੈਸਾਣੇ ॥

ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਭਵ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਤਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਾਣੇ ॥

“As the lotus lies detached in water, as the duck floats carefree on the stream, so does one cross the sea of material existence, his Mind attuned to the word.

A.G.P. 938

(d) Woman Folk

The women sect of the society was very much neglected and there was an utter need to bring it in the main stream. Gurus gave them so much regards that it seems that uptil this time, no other sect of Indian society, has been able to bestow so much honour upon them. He wrote.

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣੁ ਵੀਆਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ ॥

ਭੰਡੁ ਮੁਆ, ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨੁ ॥

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮੈ ਰਾਜਾਨੁ ॥

“From the women is our birth. In the women’s womb are we shaped; to the women are we engaged; to the women are we wedded. The woman is our friend and from the women is the family. If woman dies we seek another; through the women are the bonds of the world. Why call woman evil who gives birth to all ?”

A.G.P. 473

In sikhism women are treated at par with men and are provided with all kinds of equal opportunities. Gurus opposed the custom of ‘Sati’, ‘Dahej’ and ‘Parda’ and placed women on equal footings so much so that later on even Journal like Mai Bhago became commanders of Sikh army. In this way they were so motivated that they used the Sikh value system to bring social change in the society.

Education—A Tool of Social Change

In order to bring all these changes in vertical and horizontal perspective of social set up, Sikh Gurus made the use of the tool of education. But this tool too was not so sharp that it could grind the hard wood of the time, but they, with their value system, so sharpened it that it delivered the goods in a perfect way. About educational system of that time, Gupta, Hari Ram (1973) had said :

“Education in those days was rigid, narrow and non-productive. It was non-committal and non-compatible to the inclusion of human values and virtues and be in tune to human perfection. Such an education might have been suffocating for a person like Nanak who treated the whole of his life as undaunted odyssey in search of true education for the evaluation of man towards perfection.”

However, out of many methods, Sikh Gurus, had chosen the path of education and sharpened it. At the same time, the approach was educative and not indoctrination. The change was so well organised that one is astonished that how those who were practically dead in spirit, morals, ethics and values became such a force that they broke the neck of Mughal Empire. It was, in fact, the change brought about through the media of value based education. The main aim of education of Guru Nanak was spiritual education and to be one with Him. He says :

ਪੜਿਐ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਉਤਰੈ ॥

ਪੂਛਹੁ ਗਿਆਨੀਆ ਜਾਇ ॥

“By knowledge alone the impurities leave one not
ask thou any man of knowledge” A.G.P. 39

The function of education is to be able to know the spirit inside.

In the words of Singh Tarlochan (1968) Gurus emphasised the cultivation of cardinal values for disciplined life :

1. Sat, Santokh, Vichar, (Truth, contentment and reflection)
2. Daya, Dharam, Dan (Compassion, righteousness and charity)
3. Sidak, Sabar, Sanjam (faith, tolerance, restraint)

4. Khima, Garibi, Sewa (forgiveness, humility, and service)
5. Bhau, Gyan, Kirt (love, knowledge, and work)

All these values, however, acted as educational instruments to bring social change and Gurus made use of it to the maximum for this purpose.

I Spiritual Values

In Japuji, Guru Nanak places emphasis upon spiritual values and the theme has been repeated time and again. In Sikhism the emphasis is upon spiritual development and it takes place through the media of 'Simran' and by bringing faith in Him.

In pauri 13 of Japuji, Nanak says :

ਮੰਨੈ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਮਨਿ ਬੁਧਿ ॥

ਮੰਨੈ ਸਗਲ ਭਵਣ ਕੀ ਸੁਧਿ ॥

"Those who believe, Their minds awaken to higher consciousness, to inner knowledge of all spheres"

A.G.P. 3

This, in fact, seems to be the path of education which Sikh Gurus, not only preached but practised also. The process could be as under :

"Concentration upon Him→Spiritual development→Emotional development→Intellectual development."

With 'Simran' one can bring faith in Him and this is the highest value one can aspire. Guru says :

ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਮੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥

ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਲੇ ਪਾਈ ॥

"Without the Name, no one is Emancipated. It is through the perfect Guru, that one is Blest with the Name"

A.G.P. 1175

He thinks that one who does 'Simran' is the educated man.

ਸੋ ਪੜਿਆ ਸੋ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਬੀਨਾ ਜਿਨੀ ਕਮਾਣਾ ਨਾਉ ॥

"He alone is truly educated, wise and learned who practised the name of God"

A.G.P. 1288

The highest value of educational significance, in Sikh thought, is spiritual development. Gurus have linked all other

values with it. However, the fact remains that through the media of spiritual development, Gurus were able to create a sect of people who were pure in thoughts, social in actions, educated in spirit, loved truthful living, appreciated beauty, and who were humble to talk, to sweet in temperaments and good in actions. These people, with the spiritual education, were so much motivated that they engineered the social change in such a proportion that they devoted their lives for the goodness of others. It was because of the spiritual development only that Bhai Ghanaya could serve water both to the friends and foe and that Guru Gobind Singh could appreciate it, even during the period of war. It is here that one can imagine the social change brought through the media of value education.

II Moral Values

Sikh Gurus were mainly for all absorbing concern with the Divine. They thought that there was no world without God and no God without world. For individual ethics, they laid emphasis upon seven norms which are given in four stanzas i.e. 28 to 31 of Japuji, and repeated time and again in Guru Granth. These are contentment, life of reflection, right orientation, self discipline, undirectionality, catholicity and service. In the social sphere they dwelled catholicity and service. In the social sphere they dwelled on the role of Kings, Sadhus, Jogies, Mullahas and Pandits and wanted to bring social change with the universally accepted norms such as truthful living, humbleness, and service to humanity.

Truth was the highest virtue Sikh Gurus did not place emphasis upon it only in cognitive domain, but wanted it to put into action in actual living. They used it as an effective tool for social change.

ਸਚੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ
ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥

"Truth is great but
still greater is truthfull living."

A.G.P. 62

Again they said

ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਸਚਿ ਰਹੈ
ਸਚੇ ਸੇਵਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

“When one practiseth truth, abides in truth, is dedicated to the service of True One”-19 A.G.P. 560

Again they emphasise

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜਿਸ ਕੈ ਸਚੁ ਵਸੈ
ਸਚੇ ਸਚੀ ਸੋਇ ।

“He in whom abideth Truth his repute is true, They live with the Truth, forsake not their Lord and they Enter into themselves.” A.G.P. 27

They, time and again, placed emphasis upon it as it never grows old and cannot be destroyed. They have said.”

ਸਚੁ ਪੁਰਾਣਾ ਨਾ ਬੀਐ,
ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਮੈਲਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

“Truth never grows old the Lord’s Name is never soiled.” A.G.P. 1248

Again

ਸਚੁ ਪੁਰਾਣਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਾਹੀ
ਸੀਤਾ ਕਦੇ ਨ ਪਾਟੈ ॥

“Truth is never old and once sewn is torn never.” A.G.P. 956

Similarly, like truth the emphasis of Sikhism for making educational thought a tool for social change is humbleness, honesty and service to mankind. Guru Nanak had said :

ਮਿਠਤੁ ਨੀਵੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ
ਗੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਤਤੁ ॥

“To be sweet and humble is the essence of all virtues” A.G.P. 470

Again they have said

ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ
ਤਾ ਮਨੁ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਜਾਇ ॥

“For in ego, one can serve not (one’s Lord) and the mind is devoid (of the Nam)” A.G.P. 560

About honest way of living, which too is, with the ultimate aim of salvation, through the media of social reform, Sikh

Gurus placed emphasis upon honesty and distributive justice, which are basic for social change :

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ।

ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ।

“He alone, O Nanak, knows the right way of living who earns his livelihood with the sweat of his brow and then shares it with his fellow human beings,”

A.G.P. 1245

III Intellectual Values

Sikh Gurus placed equal emphasis upon intellectual development but subordinated it to spiritual and moral value system. The intellect is to be used to cultivate value system and not to exploit it. They said :

ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੋਨੀ ਥਕੇ ਬੇਦਾਂ ਕਾ ਅਭਿਆਸੁ ।

ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਈ ਨਹ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਵਾਸੁ ॥

“The pandit and men of silence read through the Vedas over and over again. But they charist not the Name and abide not within their (inner) home”

A.G.P. 1277

They laid so much emphasis upon intellectual development that they said :

ਸਗਲ ਤਤ ਮਹਿ ਤਤੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ।

ਸਰਬ ਦਿਆਨ ਮਹਿ ਏਕੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ।

“Of all the elements the most significant is the element of knowledge”

A.G.P. 1182

Sikh Value System and Social Change

Sikh value system is neither for the social change based on status quo, nor retaining of the torn out values but cultivation of virtues which bring change in individuals in such a way that the process of social change is sharpened. This is the backbone of Sikh way of thinking, acting, doing, behaving and living. In the words of Singh Swarnjit.

“The Gurus wanted education to prepare men for Mukti (salvation), ‘Jugti’ (act of living), Tripti, (satisfaction of life and self fulfilment) and Bhukti (joy of life or bless of life).”

For this purpose they have used education as a tool to hasten the social mobility, so as to create a casteless, colourless and creedless society in which all think at reflective level. They used education as a mode of bringing in the social change. Most of the methods used by them were, however, non-formal. They made the use of formal methods too. They have, infact, used educational tool woven with values so that all could get salvation as :

ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਤਾਂ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ।

“One can do good to other if he acquires knowledge and exercise his judgement there upon” A.G.P. 356

However, even this process of activating the social change with the mode of educational values, continue to be subordinated to spiritual advancement. Guru said :

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵੀਚਾਰੈ ।

ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਪਾਵੈ ਮਾਨੁ ।

“He who by Guru's grace, Dwells on the (Lords) Wisdom, he gathers glory”. A.G.P. 1329

It was with these aims in view that they established their own institutions, which from recent point of view, were no less than universities because rare works were written, compiled and published there. These institutions too helped to bring the social change. About this Khosla, D. N. (1982) says :

“In short, through this value scheme the Gurus sought to evolve the man in every human being in order to make him a true embodiment of the spirit that delights in doing good and no evil. And this verily opens up the true vista of the purpose and process of human life, as also of true education.”

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The following scholars raised the questions. These questions were answered by the writer.

1. Dr. Sher Singh Sher

Q. Why was the word 'sect' used ?

A. It was used in the sense that only a part of the whole population was mobilised by the actions of Sikh Gurus and all did not follow their path.

2. Dr. K. K. Mittal

Q. The word exploitation of education should be replaced by some polite word.

A. He was explained that the exploitation of education was used in good sense as is always done in educational terminology. However, the suggestion was accepted and the word exploitation was replaced by the word effective use.

3. Dr. S. K. Bajaj

- Q.** He was not relevant in his question and told that the source of paper was "Janam Sakhis" and wanted to know how the Gurus brought the social change.
- A.** He was told that his point of view was not clear. Janam Sakhis were not the source of this paper. He was also informed that Sikh Gurus brought the change in masses by demonstrating their own high character and behaviour.

SIKH VALUE SYSTEM AND MATERIALISTIC SOCIETY

DR HARBANS SINGH

Material Prosperity has been considered as an essential object of human life. The development of a sound spiritual character can have firm footing only in a sound material society. A materially wretched society may not be able to stand both on the phenomenal and spiritual grounds. In other words, materially starved persons fall victims to the selfish ends of rich people and have to sacrifice noble principles and ideals in order to satisfy their material needs. The history of many a nations bears testimony to the above fact when we find that how economically and politically strong rulers had often used the tool of 'Economic benefit' in order to use the poorest persons of the society for their selfish interest. In other way too, this paucity of material necessities is also badly affecting man's moral and spiritual growth when a tremendous time and energy has to be wasted in the pursuit of food and other necessities. If necessities of life are made available to humanity as a matter of routine, the same energy and time would be utilized for better purpose.

Poverty becomes a curse upon humanity when it causes starvation, hunger and diseases—even causing deaths. A recent study on 'hunger' reveals the fact that after every six hours about 2500 persons die on account of hunger or diseases related to poverty 'somewhere' in the world. In such a sorry state of affairs, to talk of higher religious values, is meaningless. The starving humanity has first to be provided with the basic necessities of life.

It is an admitted fact that Socio-economic conditions of a society at a particular time influence the conduct of individual members of that society. The prevalence of better Socio-economic conditions favourably affect the materialistic character of man, and vice-versa. Economic prosperity (along with other

social conditions) has been considered the fundamental material basis of any society. At present, various view-points prevail which advocate high material standards for human society, and they measure the happiness of man in terms of the availability of material comforts. The chief amongst these are Capitalist's and Communist's view-points. The Capitalistic view-point wholly favours materialistic growth, but this view point is severely criticized on account of the excess importance it gives to profit-maximisation and also for laying great emphasis on the acquisition of private property, thus resulting in widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

The protagonists of Communism claims its (Communism's) superiority over Capitalism on account of its special emphasis on equality of mankind through fair distribution of economic means and also on account of ensuring adequate material welfare for mankind.

Man being a social animal is mainly concerned with worldly life which largely consists of socio-economic problems and their solution. In the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, these persons have been treated as 'less than human' who remain isolated from society, since they neither prove useful to society nor do they benefit from the social experiences of others. A religion which does not take into account the socio-economic problems of human beings and encourages persons to shut their eyes to the hard realities of life, shall definitely lose its hold on the masses. Hence it becomes essential on the part of religion to take into account the worldly problems of mankind and to find out their solutions, then and then alone will religion's appeal for higher spiritual life have any meaning for its followers.

Sikhism has taken a keen interest in the worldly life of man. It has rejected the pessimistic view of a few 'higher forms' of religions where undue importance was given to 'Secluded Life; ignoring the socio-economic aspects altogether. The old Hindu concept of 'Maya' which had given rise to a negative approach amongst the people towards temporal values, was re-interpreted and reshaped by Sikhism in accordance with the hard realities of human life. The essential feature of Sikh thought consists in its recognition of the importance of worldly pursuits and their reconciliation with the higher spiritual values of humanity and thus providing a 'balanced approach' to worldly spiritual pursuits

for the realisation of the goal of human life. Sikh thought not only affirms the fundamental and necessary values of material pursuits but calls them as pious :

“ਖਾਣਾ ਪੀਣਾ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰ ਹੈ ਦਿਤੋਨੁ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸੰਬਾਹਿ” ॥ (ਪੰ. 472)

The significance of material requisites in the higher spiritual plane has been clearly admitted by Sikhism where the ideal of ‘Spiritual Perfection’ is made inconceivable if it does not carry alongwith it the basic requisites of life. It sharply criticises those ‘ascetics’ who treat food and other basic needs as impediments in the path of spiritual advancement and resort to various ways for their forced abandonment :

“ਅੰਨੁ ਨ ਖਾਇਆ ਸਾਦੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥.....”

ਬਸਤ੍ਰੁ ਨ ਪਹਿਰੈ ਅਹਿਨਿਸ ਕਹਿਰੈ” ॥.....”

ਅਲੁ ਮਲੁ ਖਾਈ ॥ ਸਿਰਿ ਛਾਈ ਪਾਈ ॥.....” (ਪੰ. 467)

In other words, Sikh thought upholds that for sound spiritual advancement, a man must first satisfy his basic needs so that they may not prove a hurdle in the higher spiritual path. Sri *Guru Granth Sahib* confirms the above view-point at a number of places :

“ਭੂਖੇ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥ ਯਹ ਮਾਲਾ ਅਪਨੀ ਲੀਜੈ ॥” (ਪੰ. 656)

.....

“ਮਾਨੁ ਮਾਂਗਉ ਤਾਨੁ ਮਾਂਗਉ ਧਨੁ ਲਖਮੀ ਸੁਤ ਦੇਹ ॥” (ਪੰ. 1308)

Sikh thought strongly advocates the fundamental rights of every individual to satisfy certain basic needs of life, while having a positive faith in the ‘Supreme Will of God’. It is opposed to the negative attitude towards life, which leads to bitterness and frustration. Dr. Radhakrishnan also upholds the view that material values affect spiritual life and says that spiritual values of religions can not flourish in the absence of satisfactory economic conditions because ‘economic insecurity and individual freedom do not go together’. (See his book ‘Eastern Religion and Western Thought’, p. 353).

A religion that believes in humanitarian values neither favours a life of poverty (which creates frustration, tension and worries in the minds of the people and render them incapable of spiritual and moral thinking), nor advocates a life of sensual pleasures and extreme worldly comforts with no interest in or

thought of spiritual and moral values and pursuits. Sikh thought affirms the above view-point and provides a 'balance approach' between the extreme ends of poverty on the one hand and affluence on the other :

ਜਿਸ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਤਿਸੈ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਚਿੰਤਾ ॥

ਜਿਸੁ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਥੋਰੀ ਸੁ ਫਿਰੈ ਭ੍ਰਮੰਤਾ ॥

ਦੋਹੁ ਬਿਵਸਥਾ ਤੇ ਜੋ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਸੋਈ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ਭਾਲੀਐ ॥ (ਪੰ 1019)

It may be stressed here that though a life of poverty does not find favour with Sikhism yet it is preferred when the alternative life is that of 'Unfair' and 'Immoral means :

ਸੰਤਨ ਕਾ ਦਾਨਾ ਰੂਖਾ ਸੋ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਧਾਨ ॥

ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਸਾਕਤ ਛਤੀਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਤੇ ਬਿਖੁ ਸਮਾਨ ॥ (ਪੰ: 811)

From the above discussion, it follows that Sikhism regards worldly needs as 'necessary means' to keep the body in sound condition, so that it can satisfactorily meet the challenges of higher spiritual and moral obligation of human life. In the words of S. Kapur Singh :

"The basic doctrine of Sikh way of life is referred to, namely that, (1) the life of religion must be practised in the social-political context and not by renunciation of and turning back on the world, and (2) these three aims of (dharma, artha and Kama) of human activity, as traditionally conceived, must be constantly modified by and co-ordinated with the final human goal that of God-realization. The other three activities must not be understood as 'end oriented' having their own independent postulates of orientation, but they must be regarded as 'means oriented', activities which harmoniously contribute to a full and well integrated human life, permeated with, and consciously directed to, the ultimate goal of God-realization. (See his article 'Translation and Exposition of first five Ashtpadies of Sukhmani', the Sikh Review, June (Supplement 1978).

THE GURMAT VALUE STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL DYNAMISM

PROF. GURMUKH SINGH

Axiology or the study of value system has recently attracted the Sikh scholars. Dr. Wazir Singh's '*Aspects of Guru Nanak's Philosophy*' has a casual reference to the subject. Dr. Avtar Singh's '*Ethics of the Sikhs*' is quite a serious work. Dr. Bhai Jodh Singh's Panjabi book '*Gurmat Nirnay*' has been acknowledged as a seminal work in the field. The Department of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies*, Panjabi University Patiala, has taken a bold initiative in throwing up a challenge to the Sikh scholars to reflect on various aspects of the value system incorporated in the holy *Gurbani*.

The verse of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is not the product of an intellectual exercise. It is said to have been revealed to the Great Gurus who have made special references about it in the holy *Gurbani* :

O Lalo ! As the Lord bids me, so I guide the people.¹

The source of the Guru's *Bani* (verse) is the divine word or the divine wisdom. Therefore, it may be understood that this value system differs from those systems which are created by the intellectual efforts of philosophers, social thinkers of all times and places. The latter are based on empirical and exclusively temporal way of life. The Guru's value system emanates from purely spiritual wisdom. It has nothing to do with the fancies of the philosophers and poets.

The Great Gurus enunciated these values not in consonance with the attitudes or aptitudes of their followers, because such values are liable to change with the passage of time. The Gurus built up a system of Divine values whose purpose was to prepare man not only to lead a righteous and an honourable life here in this world, but also to prepare him to be an honourable member of the Divine Order of the Lord.

Heaven is the abode of the saints,
In whose heart lives the Lord.²

Man's mind has its own limitations. It perceives material things and accordingly builds up responses. It is unable to perceive the Creator manifested in His creation. It becomes a problem for man how to love the Lord whom he is unable to perceive, with his mental faculties or through his sense organs? The Gurus called such a man materialist, whose perception cannot go beyond the seeming physical phenomena.

The Gurus have amply demonstrated through the *Gurbani* and their teachings that man can attain love of God if he completely surrenders himself to the Guru and devotes himself to his service.

One who completely surrenders himself to the Guru
He attains the desired goal,
And if he serves the Guru selflessly,
He sees the Lord face to face.³

Thus in the *Gurmat Value* system Guru is the most important person whose grace alone can enable man to attain celestial heights. Materialist is called deaf and pur-blind, according to *Gurbani*. He can neither see the Creator manifested in His creation, nor can he hear His 'Word' which resounds throughout the Universe.

Those who are blind of mind hear not the word of Lord,
With blind mind and perverted thinking,
They look ugliest of all.⁴

Different from this seeming world there is the heavenly world also whose norms and standards of conduct and values are different. The limitation of our intellectual and perceptive apparatus is the real hindrance to know these values. These Values belong to the celestial world and for properly understanding them or appreciating them we shall have to rise above the mundane intellect.

When Guru Nanak Dev ji started his prophetic mission, there were mainly two sets of systems of Values—the Hindu Values and the Islamic Values. It will be preposterous to suggest, as Trump and some Indian scholars have done, that Guru Nanak Dev mixed up the best of the two religions and created Sikh religion. Far from it, he enunciated a completely

new point of view and new system of values. The Hindu way of life esteems worship of multi-gods and goddesses in order to propitiate them so that they bestow upon the devotee the desired fruit of worldly happiness. Guru Nanak Dev, on the other hand ordained his followers not to worship these multigods, but to turn to the one Almighty for His grace through the Guru, so that the devotee may attain the celestial bliss and merge in God.

As the water mingles with water so the flame of life fuses in the Flame of the Universe.⁵

For the everlasting bliss one has to turn inward. The supreme method of attaining the inward bliss is through constantly remembering and repeating the Name, of the Lord, not only by the word of mouth, but also by stringing the holy Name to each in-taking and out-going breath, with reverence and affection. The highest Value of the Gurmat Value Structure, is the Holy Name of Lord. All other Values flow from it. According to the Gurus the Name of the Lord is so powerful that it can transform man into God.

Those who repeated His holy name,
were transformed into His shape.⁶

The scope of the present paper is to find out what were those powerful and dynamic values which transformed the meek and downtrodden people (who cheerfully embraced them) into the most formidable force which weakened and destroyed the hegemony of the Mughal, Islamic empire in India and especially in Panjab. These were the values which aroused the people of this part of northern India to rise up in revolt against the injustice and the loot and arson of the Afgan invaders during the eighteenth century and closed the doors of India on them for ever. Hari Ram Gupta, in his famous book *'History of the Sikhs'* admits with a sense of wonder, how these handful (people) followers of Guru Nanak Dev not only emancipated themselves from the shackles of the Mughals and Pathans, but also established their own rule in Panjab.

Guru Nanak Dev ji observed from his milieu that the religious leadership of the Hindus as well as of the Muslims, had become not only corrupt but also wayward, distorting and mis-interpreting the holy scriptures for their own selfish ends.

The Brahmin—the expert law-giver of Hinduism, the Qazi—the expert law-giver of Islam, and the Jogi—the head of the Yogies, had all become professional preachers devoid of devotion and the milk of human kindness.

The Qazis live upon lies,
The Bramin lives upon blood of the people,
The Yogi knows not the way
All the three mislead the world.⁷

By denouncing these false priests of the two major religions, the Guru sought to emancipate his devotees from their falsedom. In its place he threw open the portals of his Gurdwara i.e. *satsangat*, to all and sundry to the lowest of the lowly and to the outcaste even, to the Muslims and the Hindus alike resulting in the fresh value system.

This gave a new dimension to the thinking of the people. Without the universal Fatherhood of God, how could universal brotherhood of man be established? In the Holy *Sangat* of the Great Master, all were equal as brothers and sisters, emanating from the same Father. Therefore the false distinctions based on caste, colour and creed were man made, to perpetuate these false distinctions was tantamount to showing disrespect to God, the Father,

Guru Arjan Dev the fifth successor of Guru Nanak Dev went a step further. When he compiled and edited the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* in 1604, A.D. he masterfully incorporated with the holy hymns of those saints such as Kabir, the weaver, Ravi Das, Nam Dev, The tailor, Sadna—the butcher.

Who attained spiritual bliss through the Grace of the Guru.
They realized Truth, identified themselves with the WORD,
threw up the ego-based caste.⁸

The following values brought about a dynamic change in social milieu

- (a) worship of one Almighty God to the exclusion of multi-gods and goddesses⁹
- (b) the establishment of *Sangat* or the new order with equality of all, before the Guru and God, and
- (c) by elevating the lowliest of the lowly to the stature of holiest of the holy.

These dynamic values directly hit the economic exploitation of the society.

The Gurus knew that a coward was neither fit to lead an honourable life in any society nor was he fit to attain spiritual heights. The Brahmin, through his constant preaching, had created a sort of fear-psyche in the entire Hindu society. The Guru came to his rescue and made him bold. He told him that he who remembers the Lord and lives in His divine companionship need not to be afraid of any other force.

The Great Master assured their newly established Order, that *Karma* was NOT an automatic wheel of Fate. The Lord Almighty held the gear in His Holy Hand and could apply brakes to it at HIS WILL. So instead of fearing the wheel of fate, the Sikhs were taught to surrender themselves to HIS WILL.

All action is in HIS HAND

The created is powerless to act.

Everything acts according to HIS Command

There is nothing beyond HIS command.⁹

This new value that God is Supreme and not the Karma-cycle, released the bonded man from the unwarranted bondage of the Brahmin since centuries. He was now a free man, who bowed only to the will of the Great Master or the Almighty Lord, manifested in the Great Master.

Saint Rama Nand repeats the name of Lord, The WORD Given by GURU destroys millions of Karamas.¹⁰

As a corollary of the *Karma* cycle it is said that a sinner, according to Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity has no scope for spiritual attainment. But according to the Gurus the Lord is merciful and the Guru is bountiful.

Who else could keep near him the worst sinners like us,
It was the Great Master Satguru,
Who released us from the bondage of sins.¹¹

The worst of sinners and the worst of cowards were rejuvenated by the holy touch of the Great master and by the word of the Lord. Under the Brahmnical system more and more stress had been laid on the objective observances of various kinds of penances, of rites and rituals and on occasional dipping in the

holy rivers and visiting sixty eight places of pilgrimage for washing off sins. The Gurus posed a question; whether sins, originating from the mind, could ever be washed off by having a dip in the holy waters? The answer was NO. They declared that it is the mind which needs to be purified and not the body.

He cleans the body day and night but the dirt of the mind cannot be washed off by washing the body.¹²

The Gurus, therefore, laid more stress on the subjective purification of the mind. The Sikhs were enjoined to lead a pure and simple life.

Look ! in the current Age, the outward observances are of no avail,

Without the pure heart and soul, and the worship of Almighty One can never attain any spiritual abode.¹³

(Bhai Gurdas Var I/16)

Death has been in all places and in all ages, a dreadful mystery which mankind has always dreaded. The Gurus were well aware of this psychological weakness of the man who was going to be transformed into *Khalsa* the embodiment of those spiritual qualities. It was in the fitness of things that Guru Nanak Dev to bring man out of the fear of death declared, "If you are afraid of death, do'nt come to me."

If thou seeketh to enjoy the game of Love, Come to me not fearing Death. Never hesitate to die, if thou walketh the path Divine.¹⁴

The Gurus placed a new point of view regarding death.

He alone lives, in whose heart the Lord has made His home, Oh Nanak, all other men are dead.¹⁵

In other words, the death of the body was a small natural process, which need not be given much importance. According to the Guru, if a soul wanders in any physical form oblivious of the Lord it is a dead soul.

Those, who eat drink and make merry without devotion to Lord are lepers who die and are ever reborn as such.¹⁶

The dead soul can be rejuvenated by the holy touch and the grace of the Guru.

The Guru dripped the Nector of the Lord into my mouth,
Oh me.

And made my dead soul alive.¹⁷

They prescribed repetition of the Name of the Lord with devotion, faith and love. And this has worked wonders. Handful of devotees of the Gurus braved the mighty Mughal empire, and carved out a powerful state for themselves where they lived honourably on the principles of equality, fraternity, justice, goodwill for all and malice towards none, as taught by their great masters. It was a unique transformation of the dead souls into the living and the enlightened one.

The sacrifice of the Gurus put a premium on the behaviour of the Sikhs who from then onwards never shuddered Death. Prof. Puran Singh symbolically but rightly said about the Sikh character that they even scoff at death ! For them death is no more a powerful foe. The Gurus taught them.

It is the birth right of heroes to die gracefully And they are admitted to the Presence of God. Where they are honoured as truly brave.

The main thrust of the *Gurmat* Values has been to liberate man from the unwarranted shackles of superstition, slavery of priestly class, and the fear of death. The living examples of the martyrdom of the Great Masters put a premium on these values. The *Baisakhi* of 1699 A. D. at Anandpur was the culmination of the series of tests to which these values had been put to. The high drama of *Sis-Bhent* or the complete surrender to the will of the Tenth Master was aimed at testing whether the *Khalsa* of the Guru was afraid of death ? So far the *Bhagati Marg*, or the Devotional religious way of life meant telling of beads besides certain prescribed rituals. History had witnessed that instead of matching sword with the sword of the foreign invaders of India, these devotees simply went down on their knees before them or before their personal gods to spare their places of worship, their wealth and their honour. But neither the invader nor the personal gods ever granted their beseechings. They could not resist the invader with sword.

With the advent of these dynamic values enunciated by the Gurus, the entire *Khalsa* in Panjab, was *energized* and rose in

revolt against the high-handedness of the Mughal administration. The Guru taught his devotees to match sword with the enemy if all their peaceful *maneuvers* failed to bring round the foe.

The new cult of *Bhakti* and *Shakti* was to meet the new challenges of the times. History of the Panjab stands as witness to testify that even the invincible *Duranis* and *Abdalis* acknowledged this rising star of *Khalsa* on the horizon of the Panjab.

These values brought about a tremendous religious consciousness in the two communities living in Panjab—the Hindus and the Muslims. This religious consciousness and the liberation of man ushered in a new kind of political consciousness which opened up new vistas combating the discrimination and injustice in the state.

We are neither Hindus nor Muslims, The God of the Muslim and of the Hindu is our life breath.

The Sikh belonged to God, the Almighty. This gave him a new sense of self-respect and confidence in his Master. From now on he was to conduct himself in a graceful and honourable manner, also allowing others to live in peace and without fear of oppression and injustice. The *Khalsa* armed himself to ensure peace and justice in a society where mostly the law of the jungle prevailed. Truth, humility contentment, love of humanity and seeking welfare of all were those high values, taught by the Guru, which make human life sublime. It is unfortunate that we the members of the new order, have failed to dig out these values from the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*. We have neither lived up to these values ourselves, nor have we placed them before the world for consideration and assimilation. None the less, these values transcend the bounds of time and space. They have a universal purpose of unifying man into one brother-hood. They seek to raise man to the status of Godhood.

FOOT-NOTES

1. *Siri Guru Granth Sahib*, P-722.
2. *Ibid.* P-742.
3. *Ibid.* P-286
4. *Ibid.* P-1245, 46

5. Ibid, P-278
6. Ibid, P-667
7. Ibid, P-662
8. Ibid, P-67.
9. Ibid, P-I.
10. Ibid, P-1195
11. Ibid, P-167
12. Ibid, P-265
13. Bhai Gurdas, Varan (1/16) S. G. P. C.
14. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, P-1412.
15. Ibid, P-142
16. Ibid, P-306
17. Ibid, P-539
18. Ibid, P-579

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7. Evolution of Khalsa by Dr. Indu Bhushan Banerjee.
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SIKH RELIGIO-SPIRITUAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL DOCTRINES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

DR SHER SINGH SHER

Introduction

Unless one has the knowledge of darkness, one cannot appreciate light. Similarly, the Sikh Value System for social change can be properly understood if one has the adequate knowledge of the Hindu Social Value System against which Sikhism revolted. Hence this paper has been written in this perspective.

Guru Nanak Dev the very founder of Sikhism and his successors, outright rejected and condemned Hindu anti-social, anti-national and anti-humane socio-religious and educational immobility based on Hindu caste system. Brahmanical Socio-religious brutality, untouchability and consequent disability imposed on millions of people called *Shudras* and *Chandalas* to degrade, debase, demean, demoralize and dehumanise them conducing to resultant disunity and weakness of the people of India and its most obnoxious and saddest thing to say is that these atrocities were sanctioned by the Hindu Shastras. But on the other hand Sikhism uplifted the human beings through its universality, repudiating the individual Brahmanical ego-centricity and condemned on the whole Hindu ethnocentricity, condemning caste system, discarding untouchability by preaching and practising religion of universal brotherhood, with the message of salvation for all, not based on blood, birth or caste but on the basis of one's individual worth accepting one's deed to be much higher than one's mere caste and creed. Thus Sikhism introduced a new value system to change and uplift society as a whole. This is what will propound in this research paper and I will try to explain how Sikhism and the *Khalsa* of Guru Gobind Singh became different and stood aloof from Hinduism rejecting its

all humanity-crushing tenets in order to create a new milieu to bring about and establish equality amongst the people without any discrimination. As all the other ills emerge from Hindu caste system so I will have to give a lot of due space to this theme which it necessitates because the religious, spiritual, social, political and economic disability of millions of people take birth from the concept of caste or birth which inculcates the complex of superiority or inferiority based on birth or blood.

We are living in the age when education is very common and nothing is accepted without rationality as scientism is ruling over the world and especially the young people are more rational and it is they who are wanted most in society. Therefore, the ideas have to be expressed on systematic, sound and scientific lines. I want to deal with the subject from several points of view; the origin of caste, its evolution and its practice in general as enunciated by the Hindu *Shastras* and generally practised by the Hindus. I will explain it as an anthropologist and sociologist. I will also try to explain it as Sikhism rejects it, as a theologian. Something will also be said about the destructive and reactionary roles of caste system.

Vedic Origin and Hindu Practice of Caste

Ubiquity¹ of the Hindu Caste system struck a person according to the foreign ethnologist at once. Another foreign scholar who visited India in the third B.C. Century was surprised for its social immobility.² The Rig Veda³ is the origin of Hindu Caste System. The Rigvedic *Chaturvarṇa* is a four-fold division of society, mutually antagonistic, which not only amused the foreign invaders and raiders, but also strengthened them to enslave, oppress and exploit the Indian society.

The most miserable plight fell to the lot of the *Shudras* whose status and penalised disabilities are described by various Hindu *Shastras* like the *Kaṭhka Samhitā*,⁶ the *Aitrya Brahmana*,⁷ *Panchvimsa Brahmana*,⁸ *Apstamba Dharam Sutra*,⁹ *Vasishtha Dharam Sutra*,¹⁰ *Vishnu Dharam Sutra*,¹¹ *Vishu Smṛiti*,¹² *Gautam Dharam Sutra*,¹³ *Bṛihaspati Dharam Sutra*¹⁴ and *Narad Smṛiti*¹⁵. To the woe of humanity most callous treatment to the *Shudras* is enjoined and sanctioned by Manu and his reputed *Manu Smṛiti*,¹⁶ in which he prescribes untold punishments to keep the *Shudras* under the feet of the other three castes depriving them for ever of educa-

tion, good living, good food and making him unlawful to hold any property so that they may ever remain incarnated in the dungeon of ignorance and drowned in the sea of slavery. The Hindu Caste hierarchy committed inhumane atrocities on the million of *Shudras* that will always tarnish the Hindu society. That is why the world famous scholar and law maker at the same time, one of the conspicuous victims of the Hindu caste system has written. "The Hindu civilisation gauged in the light of these social products could hardly be called civilisation. It is a diabolical contrivance to suppress and enslave humanity. Its proper name would be infamy."¹⁷

As a matter of fact, *Shudra* born in Punjab cannot feel the pain which his Hindu-caste-accursed brethern of other parts of India, have been feeling as the poisonous bite of Hindu caste system has been weakened in Punjab due to the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and their religion.

Truly speaking as quoted by Dr Gersand Gunha¹⁸ and Haddon¹⁹ it is the *Rig Veda* which gave birth to the cut-throat razor of racism. Many terms full of hatred are used in the *Rig Veda* by the *Aryans* for the aboriginals afterwards called *Shudras* and *Chandalas*...the terms like '*Awarana*' (Casteless)' '*Antagaya*' (the last born)' '*Antya*' (the last one)' '*Antyawasni*' (living out of bounds) and '*Anasya*' (snub nosed or noseless), whereas they used the terms of *Dvijya* (twice born) and '*Swarna*' (gold) for themselves.

The Hindu caste system crippled the Indian society, stunted its growth, demented its mentality, degraded human dignity, dehumanised humanity, demoralised the nation and ridiculed it like a buffoon who laughs at himself when the spectators laugh at him.

The *Shudras* were not allowed to speak, hear and read *Sanskrit* nor at all hear the Vedic Mantras for which they were called '*Mirdhakvak*'²⁰, born from *Krishnayoni*²¹ (black uterus) and '*Anasya*'²² (noseless/snubnosed). But it has become a faith among the Hindus for the caste system having invincible and divine sanction of their religion.

As already mentioned *Manu Smriti*²³ is the cruelest and most offensive attack on the rights of down-trodden whom he called *Chandalas*, *Shavapakas* and *Apapatra* and he deprived

them of all the rights of eating good food, wearing good clothes, possessing property except dogs and donkeys, getting education, living in good houses and so many other dehumanising bans were imposed on them. I have read very vast literature on Hindu Caste system and to know more about it the writings of authors named here can be read profitably—Altekar²⁴, Bhattacharya²⁵, Blunt²⁶, Cox²⁷, Crooks²⁸, Dutt²⁹, Forbes³⁰, Irving³¹, Kerr³², Kikani³³, Marshall³⁴, Mayne³⁵, Muir³⁶, Nesfield³⁷, North³⁸, O'Malley³⁹, Faulian⁴⁰, Risley⁴¹, Senart⁴², Sherring⁴³, Steel⁴⁴, Lad⁴⁵, and Wilson⁴⁶, besides many census reports and ethnographic volumes on India by scores of Indian and foreign writers.

The infernal effect of caste is described in the words, "The tyranny of caste extends from the most trifling to the most imperative affairs of Hindu life. It cripples the independent action of the individual, sows the seeds of bitter discord between the different sections of society, encourages the most adominable practices and dries up all the springs of that social, moral and intellectual freedom which alone can secure greatness, whether to individuals or nations. It has pampered the pride and insolence of the *Brahmins* by teaching them to look upon themselves, not withstanding all their weaknesses, as the favourites of gods, nay the very gods on earth who are to keep the lower orders in the State of utter degradation and illiterate servitude. Such is our caste system; so unjustifiable in principles, so unfair in organisation and so baneful in its consequences to the highest interest of the country."⁴⁷

An honest Hindu of clear conscience shall hang his head in shame in reading the books written by Sanjana⁴⁸, Hazari⁴⁹ Keer⁵⁰ and Miss Mayo.⁵¹ So much so even the Arya Samajists who then boasted of and even now boast of challenging the Hindu Caste system behaved in a very shameful manner on the occasion of the conference of their organisation named '*Jat Pat Sodak Mandal*' the society of breaking caste system, held at Lahore in 1936. They approached Dr. B. R. Ambedkar to preside over the Conference and read his presidential address. He accepted it with the condition that having the privilege of being its President, he would get it published himself under his own supervision at Bombay so that his writing might not be tempered

with. He did his duty and bravely and authentically criticised and attacked the *Vedas* and other Hindu *Shastras* which give sanction to the divinity of the Hindu caste system. It is strange to tell that the organisers of that organisation could not tolerate the contents of his presidential address which he had already got printed at Bombay. So much so that they tried to purchase whole lot of the edition to destroy it and on his refusal, an attempt was made to secretly burn the copies in which they failed and he published it under the title of "Annihilation of Caste" and he wrote about this episode, "I am not sorry with this clash with the Arya Samajists. The Arya Samajists have done great mischief in making the Hindu society a stationery society, by preaching that the *Vedas* are eternal, without beginning, without end and infallible and that the social institutions of the Hindus being based on the *Vedas* are also eternal, without beginning, without end, infallible and therefore requiring no change. To be permeated with such a belief is the worst thing that can happen to a community. I am convinced that the Hindu society will not accept the necessity of reforming itself unless and until the Arya Samajists' ideology is completely destroyed.⁵²

Science Rejects Caste

The word caste is derived from the Latin *Castus* which means pure. So caste is a birth-bound and marriage barrier. To keep one's blood pure and so caste is the womb of races and the western imperialists and colonialists practised racism against the coloured people and especially after the publication of Charles Darwin's "Origin of Species" and "Descent of Man" and thus the inferiority and superiority were ascribed to different types of mankind dividing them into higher and lower groups attributing the higher and ruling qualities to the white people. So much so that there came up some western racists who named their books under the influence of racial differences to uphold racism. Two or three such books are, "Racial Realities in Europe",⁵³ and "The Menace of Colour".⁵⁴ But as the humanistic anthropology advanced in deeper and deeper researches, the anthropologists' like Boas⁵⁵ and Taylor⁵⁶ rejected the concepts of different races of man and castes and the plural races were replaced with ethnic groups. The world

famous physical anthropologist Montagu made a very epoch "The layman's conception is so confused or emotionally muddled that any attempt to modify it would sure to be met by the greatest obstacle at all, the term "Race" itself. This is another reason why the attempt to retain the term 'race' in popular parlance must fall. The term is a trigger word, utter it, and a whole series of emotionally conditioned responses follow. The phrase, "ethnic group" suffers from no such defect."⁵⁷ Segerist said, "It is never sound to continue the use of terminology with which the minds of millions of people have been poisoned, even when the old terms are given new meanings."⁵⁸ Simpson also criticises the vague meaning of the word race and its consequent perils. Huxley and Haddon⁵⁹ rejected the term in 1936.⁶⁰ By 1950, many Asian slave countries got independence and the African countries were also simmering with this struggle. UNESCO played the greatest role in rejecting the belief in racism or castism on the basis of superiority or inferiority and after long discussions of the renowned social scientist of different disciplines they held three different conferences, first on 18th July, 1950, second on 9th June, 1951 and third on 15th July, 1952. The conclusion was called "Statement on Race", prepared by physical anthropologists and geneticists, they declared "There is no evidence that race mixture produces disadvantageous results from biological point of view. The social results of race mixture, whether for good or bad can generally be traced to social factors".

Sikhism Against Caste and Racism

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion was born at the time when India was politically slave but religio—socially ethnocentric and egocentric. The *Brahmin* was the greatest egotist in society, whose system of *Chaturvarna* had divided the society into fragments. Guru Nanak was a universalist and bravely took up the hard task of unifying Indian society and addressed and accepted all the human beings as *bhāis* or brothers, then raised to *Sardars*, *Singhs*, *Khalsa*, Saints and soldiers and to the highest the physio-spiritual summit, of saint-soldiers. To Guru Nanak all human beings were equal and the low is the one who forgets God⁶¹ and it is useless⁶² to make a division on the basis of caste system. He asked all the people to realise⁶³ the glory of the

Lord and keeping in view the Hindu society he said that there are very few people who are free from castism and amongst whom the doubts of *jāt pāt*⁶⁴ are dispelled. He advises not to ask anybody's caste as his virtues are his actual deeds.⁶⁵ Guru Angad Dev, the second Guru of the Sikhs said that one should not worry or feel to bother about the caste of others as it creates a lot of suffering⁶⁶ and the true *Brahmin* is the one who had realised *Brahman*.⁶⁷ Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Guru also condemned caste mentioning the names of the saints⁶⁸ who were born in the low castes. He also cites the name of *Sukh Rishi*⁶⁹ who was *Brahmin* but became the disciple of Janka, a *Khashtriya* and then said that out of all four *Varns* or castes, the supreme is the one which has realised God.⁷⁰ Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru clearly proclaimed that inspite of undergoing all the Hindu practices and beliefs the people of higher castes are not equal to a *Chandala*⁷¹ if the ritualists of high castes are empty of the realisation of God. Repudiating the Hindu practice of depriving the *Shudras* of studying the Hindu *Shastras*, Guru Arjan Dev says, "The teachings of Holy Word are common and open to all the four castes, *Brahmins*, *Kashtriyas*, *Vaishas* and *Shudras*".⁷² He again says that while remembering the Lord, the people of all the four castes⁷³ even the *Chandala* attain salvation. He rejected the bindings of Brahminism by including the hymns of saints, Ravi Dass, Kabir and Namdev who were born of low or *Shudra's* casts, in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Gobind Singh wrote, "Recongise whole of humanity as a single *jati*".⁷⁴ The very first foreign writer who wrote the first book in English on Sikhism wrote, "the invidious appellations of *Brahmins*, *Khashtriyas*, *Vaisha* and *Shudras* were abolished in the religious code of Gobind, every Khalsa, Singh was equal and had the like title to the good things of the world, to the blessings of the future life".⁷⁵

Swami⁷⁶ Vivekanand realised that Guru Gobind Singh was the first man in India who challenged caste system, united diffetent castes and created a very strong *Khalsa* which did the maximum for freedom. It is sad to tell that the *Brahmins* and their votaries, the *Rajputs* fought against Guru Gobind Singh and his Sikhs, enlisting themselves in the army of the Mughal rulers.

The Sikh history is worth-reading to get inspiration from the records of the great Sikhs who rose from the *Shudras* to the positions of Chiefs and rulers.

A Brief Glance at the Hindu Shastras

As already mentioned in this paper, the laws given by the Hindu *Shastras* have been very harsh in dealing with the *shudras* or low-caste people. The *Rig-Veda*, which is considered as revealed scripture, is the originator of castism and racism. The *Brahmin* is established as the paragon of humankind and Indian society exists for the *Brahmins*.⁷⁷ The religion and politics are practised as a Unity,⁷⁸ and no king deserves allegiance without divine sanction.⁷⁹ *Mahabhart*a⁸⁰ enjoins on Hindu to strictly observe the harshness with the *Shudras*. A king cannot be coronated without the blessings of a *Brahmin*.⁸¹ Every good thing belongs to the *Brahmin*.⁸² Even a *Kashtriya* of 100 years had to look upon a *Brahmin*⁸³ of ten years old as his father. Everything is protected if the property of a *Brahmin*⁸⁴ is protected. If the earth is ruled by a *Khastriya* it is because of a *Brahmin*⁸⁵ being not available. The *Khastriyas* are to the *Brahmins*⁸⁶ as the wives are to the husbands. Protect a *Brahmin*⁸⁷ like a son and worship him like a father. In *Ramayana* also the *Chandals* were just like slaves to the other castes. The *Khastriyas* honoured *Brahmins*, both are honoured, obeyed by the *Vaisha*, while *Shudra* obeyed them all.⁸⁸ This is the mean tale of the self-fortification, safety and security of the *Brahmin* and this all is to degrade the poor *Shudras*.

Here, I may tell something about the man eating-monstrous laws of Manu to illtreat, enslave and degrade the helpless *Shudras*. He repeats the hymns of the *Rig Veda*⁸⁹ from the *Purshakhand*, about the creation of four castes to grind the human grains between the mill stones of his laws. Supremacy of the *Brahmins*⁹⁰ is eternal incarnation⁹¹ of the sacred law. The wrath of *Brahmin* can destroy the king.⁹² Although a *Brahmin* follows a mean profession, yet he is a great divinity.⁹³ A *Shudra*⁹⁴ is born to serve others deprived of all rights to learning and one who teaches him will sink into hell⁹⁵ along with his pupil. Kautilya's *Arithshastra* described to the compendium⁹⁶ of all *Arithshastras* which founded the new science of politics, prescribes the punishment for a *Shudra* for

adultery to burn him wrapped in mats.⁹⁷ Similarly, *Gautam Sutra*⁹⁸ *Padma Purana*⁹⁹, *Vishnu Purana*¹⁰⁰ and *Archina*¹⁰¹ prescribed all sorts of cruelties depriving the *Shudra* of all human rights. The Hindu brethren are deeply devoted to Ram Rajya for which they prey to reestablish it. Their Godified Rama was so much under the influence of *Brahmins* that he killed a *Shudra* named Shambuk¹⁰² for reciting the holy mantras of *Vedas*. Dronyacharya's cutting the right thumb of Ekalava, an aboriginal of Orissa, as *Dakshina*, is another sad story to describe the cruelty of Hindu caste ridden prejudice against the poor people and it was done to disable Ekalava so that he might never shoot an arrow in life to excel Arjuna or any other *Kashtriya*. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar made the following observations about the Hindu caste system, as "The existence of these classes is an abomination. The Hindu civilisation gauged in the light of these social products could hardly be called civilisation. It is a diabolical contrivance to suppress and enslave humanity. Its proper name would be infamy."¹⁰³

Sikh Values of Social Change

The Sikh Gurus could not uplift society with their religio-spiritual and sociological doctrines for social change without defying and rejecting the humanity-hewing Hindu caste system. They did defy it and reject it and so did *Gurbani* and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Hence, concludingly, this Sikh challenge is described below :

Sikhism begins with Guru Nanak's *Mool Mantra* with the digit ONE to manifest the Only and Only One God. *Ikk-Onkaar*¹⁰⁴ like the *Quranic* belief of "*Wahid Allah Hoo*". So it rejects the belief in Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses and idolatry.

In this *Mool-Mantra* Guru Nanak discards the "*Avtarvad*" in which God Himself comes to the earth taking the birth of a human being, by addressing God¹⁰⁵ as '*Ajoni*' (Birthless). Sikhism teaches to evaluate a person according to his personal deeds and merits as Guru Nanak taught, "Do not bother about any body's caste. This is realised from *satsang*, the true congregations. The deed of a person comprises his caste and not his birth"¹⁰⁶

In the case of Hindus the *Brahmins* is their *guru* who

baptises a male and women's guru is her husband but in the case of the Sikhs, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, "The Holy Word" of the Guru is their Guru and vice versa and it is through and through surcharged with *Amrit*. The devotee realises this truth with his unshakeable faith in the Guru.¹⁰⁷ There is no caste-based priestly class among the Sikhs. Sikhism rejects idolatry and Hindu *karamkand*, ecclesiasticism. The Sikh value system for social change is liberator which has universal appeal for the whole humanity. Sikhism appeared as a saviour of the oppressed people in the true sense of chivalry as a chivalrous person is ever to fight for the under-dog and bravely suffer all sorts of sacrifices.

This is what exactly the Sikhs did throughout their history for the degenerated underdog, oppressed and suppressed by foreign invaders and before the advent of the *Khalsa Panth* the Hindu had been outraged for many centuries. The Hindu religio-spiritual value system degraded the people but Sikhism upgraded the down-trodden and raised them from nothingness to surprising height of greatness.

The welcome to all the mankind in the Sikh *Gurdawaras*, *Langar*, *Pangat*, *Sangat* and *Sarovars* are ennobling sociological doctrines of Sikh faith whereas even the ever-cleaner Holy water of Ganga is polluted with the touch of *Shudras*. In the very beginning the Sikh Gurus and Sikhism have been uplifting the people who were treated by the *Brahmins* as dregs of the Indian society but the Sikh faith accomplished matchless social change. It enabled them to enjoy the opportunity of economic, social, religious, spiritual and political upgradation right from the *Jats* dubbed as *Shudras* according to Hindu caste hierarchy.

The Sikh baptism is unique method of Guru Gobind Singh as all the people sip the Holy *Amrit* from the same Bowl and devotees who become the *Khalsa* and join the *Khalsa Panth* pledge to behave with each other like real brothers and sisters of the same religio-spiritual parentage as it is declared and they faithfully accept from the moment of baptism onward that their spiritual father is Guru Gobind Singh and their spiritual mother is Mata Sahib Devaan. The Sikh baptism is universal, the same and open to both sexes.

On baptism the Sikhs are strictly instructed never to believe in and worship any god or goddess except one God called

Satnam or *Waheguru* in Sikh Theology or Sikhology the term which I first coined in 1968 in my paper which I read in the first Spiritual summit Conference of World Religions organised and held by the Temple of Understanding, Washington D. C., U. S. A.

A baptised person is rigidly instructed never to cut his or her hair or do any harm to them in any way from any part of the body. On baptism the original name, original caste or place of birth and its stigma along with its traditional profession and original faith are erased and every male's name is suffixed with the word 'Singh' and that of a woman with "Kaur". In this way the nomenclature of the *Khalsa* becomes uniform all over the world. The baptised one has to shun all narcotics and intoxicants, earn his livelihood honestly (*Kirt Karni*) sharing earnings with the poor and needy fellow beings (*Wand Chhakna*) and meditating on the name of God (*Naam Japna*), to bear the symbols called "*Panj Kakaar*", never to misuse his arms but never to fear or hesitate to use them for the sake of his or her honour, faith and for the helpless poor and oppressed people besides using them in self defence. These are the values of Sikh way of life due to which inspite of being so small in number, the *Khalsa Panth* incomparably contributed to the struggle for Independence of India and delivered Hindustan and the Hindus from the clutches of foreign raiders, invaders and rulers. But after all what does comprise the *Khalsa Panth* and what type of people? Truly speaking, it is done by the creation of new value system for social change accomplished by the votaries or selfless devotees of the *Khalsa Panth* the 70 per cent or more of whom were recruited from the *Shudras*.

What the Sikh religio-spiritual value system for social change is, one can imagine and realise on concentrating Guru Gobind Singh at the time of founding the *Khalsa Panth* when after baptising the *Panj Piyaras* (Five Dear Ones) who were accepted for baptism after a strange test of offering their respective heads to the Guru and afterwards his standing before them with folded hands to request them to baptise him. It may be pointed out here that excepting one of the *Kauri* Caste, all the other four belonged to the *Shudras* about 1000 Bhai Gurdas

Singh wrote in the 41st *Vaar* "What a wonderful champion in the form of Guru Gobind Singh is born. He is a Guru as well as a disciple before his own disciples". The Sikh Gurus and their followers had to face many troublesome happenings at the heads of the *Brahmins* and their caste ridden prejudiced *Rajput* followers but still the Caravan of the *Khalsa Panth* marched on with their value system for social change.

Hinduism is a Brahmanical value system to divide society in countless castes as their *Shastras* teach, preach and reach the region of wreckless racking, raking and breaking humanity to impose beastly and brutal punishments on the *Shudras* if they ever tried to mingle and become a part of the Hindu Society. Hence it is not understandable what our Hindu brethern call a nation when the people of the country are drowned in the cease-pool of mutual hatred and intolerance? The Sikh Guru declared that religious freedom, spiritual salvation and social equality are the born rights of all human beings without any discrimination of caste.

Sikhism is a peerless revolution in the history of the world and a seasoned writer has rightly said in the very first sentence of the preface to his book, "The Sikh Movement was not only an egalitarian social revolution, it was a plebian political revolution as well. In fact it was far more radical than the French Revolution of 1783-1815. The plebian character of the Sikh Revolution however, has not received the notice and the attention it deserved."¹⁰⁸

It is deplorable that some Hindus and especially the *Arya Smajists* have been trying to drag the Sikhs back to the Hindu Caste-conundrum and chaos as after describing Guru Nanak, in all derogatory words, Swamy Dayanand, the founder of *Arya Smaj* writes in his Magnum opus advising the Sikhs to give up their faith and relapse to Hinduism "Ved matt ki unnati Karen to bahut achhi batt¹⁰⁹ hai". (It is excellent if the Sikhs progress in the development of Vedism). He said it more than a century ago. The *Khalsa* of Guru Gobind Singh has been passing through hard tests since the time of Swamy Dayanand but in history there never come a time of worse difficulties for them than they are facing at present.

Inspite of the protest of the Sikh members and their refusal

to sign the Constitution of Independent India, the Indian Government included the Sikhs in the Hindu religion in the Article 25 of the Constitution. The *Khalsa Panth* is singular in its identity and entity and how much ignorant and outrageous it is that even the present *Jagat Guru* Shankaracharya of Puri appeared on the Television after the Blue Star Operation at Golden Temple Amritsar and said, "*Sikh Dharam Hindu Dharam ki hi ek sampardae hai*" (Sikhism is a sect of Hinduism). Guru Gobind Singh rightly foresaw the future and warned his *Khalsa* of its own value system for social change that, "so long as the *Khalsa Panth* maintains its distinct identity, every glory and greatness will be bestowed on it but when it relapses to the Brahmanical Hinduism I will not trust it."

Many people do need to realize that the *Khalsa Panth* as shaped by Guru Gobind Singh is the natural and apothetic fruit of the plant of the ideology of Guru Nanak. So a famous Hindu scholar has aptly written, "The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh has been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the *Khalsa* way to glory was undoubtedly, forged by Govind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak, who had obtained it, as it were, by smelting the Hindu ore, and burning out the dross of indifference and superstition of the masses and the hypocrisy and phariseicism of the priests".¹¹⁰

Here it may also be clarified that the Hindu value system of the *Shastras* does not allow the conversion of the *Shudras* to Hinduism as none can rise in status in this manner and one has got to remain gagged and bound with one's Caste for one's whole life and continue himself or herself by serving the high castes to earn a higher birth next time. Many Hindu scholars have expounded this theory of caste *Karma* but one can profitably read the work of Ramachandra Aiyar.¹¹¹

These days the Congress Government is up and doing to separate religion from politics though the congressmen do not miss any opportunity to interfere in the religious affairs of the minorities if they can exploit some situation or can divide or split the minority communities. It has already been told that the Hindu polity is based on the Hindu religious *Shastras*. Kautalya, the greatest doyen of the Hindu polity repeatedly emphasises the symbiosis of religion and politics. A renowned

Hindu scholar writes, "Religion has close contact with life and it is said that religion is life itself. How can politics connected with life be kept apart from religion? Unless the identity of politics with religion is maintained and practised, politics as such can never be free from being dangerous to the society and the world."¹¹² A group of the Heads of different Hindu religious bodies started a '*Rashtriya Sadbhavna Yatra*' from Haridwar and met Prof. Darshan Singh, the Jathedar of Akal Takhat, Amritsar on March 9, 1987. The leader of the *Yatra*, Sukhmani Vam Dev told the newsmen the necessity and importance of religion and it was resolved that religion cannot be separated from politics.

What the Congressmen, the so called most obedient sons of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Nation will say on reading the belief of their respected political father, "I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."¹¹³

So, the *Khalsa Panth* cannot be split into twain being a Saint-soldier for being the follower of the SAINT SOLDIER, GURU GOBIND SINGH.

Therefore it is the high time for the Sikhs, the *Khalsa* of Guru Gobind Singh who sacrificed himself, whole of his family and lakhs of Sikhs to protect India and her people, uplifting the masses and uniting them so much so as to say, "I am what I am, due to these masses otherwise there are millions and millions like me who are mere nobody." He infused in his *Khalsa* the spirit of selfless service to and selfless sacrifice for fellow beings and for the oppressed. He taught his followers humility but also taught them the difference between humility and humiliation. So, O *Khalsa*, may you go ahead with self-respect with the motto of, "Live and let live" to fulfil the unique value system for social change, serving your country, upholding truth and doing good to all human beings without any discrimination—————humble but still brave to never tolerate any humiliation.

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ESSENTIAL POSTULATES OF SIKHISM AND THEIR SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Contemporary Sikhism is in crisis. Caught up in an unprecedented situation the Sikh community is today at the crossroads of its destiny. While other living religions of the World are preparing to enter the twenty-first century with a renewed sense of missionary role and responsibility, in the aftermath of the collapse of secular leftist utopias, Sikh religion remains bogged down in the past. No doubt, modern Sikh scholarship can boast of qualitative standards, but there is little awareness of the challenges of modern times. The imperatives of the present day social and political reality remain unattended and the ideological concerns ignored. The sovereign identity of the Sikh doctrine is not yet fully realised by our scholars. The Vedantic idiom overshadows the exegesis of Sikh philosophy. Sikh spiritualism, Sikh ethics, Sikh polity and Sikh value pattern have not been woven into a coherent pattern. Ritualism is encrusting the spirit of Sikhism. Schismatic sects are breaking the organic unity of Sikh society. The heroic revolutionary tradition of Sikhism, moulded by Guru Gobind Singh, is being confused with the aberration of violence both by the protagonists and opponents of the former.

The institutions of Sikhism inherited from its historical tradition have not been squared up with the social and political structures adopted from the Western secular traditions. Take for instance the institutions of *Sarbat Khalsa* and *Gurmata* that so well shaped the destiny of the Sikh people in their struggle for ascent to political power during the eighteenth century. The *Sarbat Khalsa* institution represented the unified corporate personality of the Khalsa, with *Gurmata* as its uni-willed voice, born and becoming articulate in a self-transcending state of mind in the holy presence of the *Guru Granth* with an intuitive

awareness that the *Guru Panth* is the manifest form of the Divine, a Self-determination of God in its temporal aspect, in historical time. The *Gurmata* as such was an instance of both self-transcendence and self-realization, it was not the subordination of the individual to the collective will. That is how the *Gurmata* was a categorical imperative inducing total and absolute willing allegiance. In other words, *Sarbat Khalsa* is not of the nature of direct participatory democracy and *Gurmata* is not a kind of unanimous resolution or consensus. These institutions, borrowed from the Western secular traditions, have altogether different premises in that they are based on unitized, atomistic individual wills which, when becoming like-minded, aggregate themselves into unanimous resolution, consensus or majority voice; and the individual will is, by accepted convention, subordinated to the collective will of the majority, with the minority will taking a back-seat as a legitimate dissent. The point is that our twentieth century *Sarbat Khalsa* congregations are except in form and name, nothing but indigenized copies of the political structures as they took shape in the Western secular tradition in the era of bourgeois democracy based on the atomistic conception of society composed of men and women with separate individualities of their own. Hence the unresolved contradiction between the form and the essence of today's *Sarbat Khalsa*—a contradiction that affects the spiritual sanctity and moral authority of the *Gurmatas*. Are we going to see the lumpenization of the *Sarbat Khalsa* tradition? Who is responsible for this state of affairs? The Sikh intelligentsia! We have not been able to evolve new organic forms synthesizing the religious and political institutions, inherited from the Sikh historical tradition, with the social and political structures that have come to us from the Western tradition. This is only one instance of the crisis in which Sikhism finds itself today. To overcome this crisis, we have to interpret the essential metaphysical concepts of Sikh religion in the modern perspective and to work out and understand their sociological significance in the context of contemporary social reality that throws up certain uneasy questions.

Has Sikhism reached an impasse where it requires an internal reformation for its survival and progress, *a la* the

Protestant reformation that brought Christianity out of the middle ages into the modern times? Do Sikhism and contemporary Sikh community have a common destiny in the sense that the survival and progress of the one depends upon that of the other? Or do they have distant destinies? If so, what is the relationship between the two? In other words, what is the nature of the existing relationship between the universal in Sikhism and its historical determination in the form of the Sikh community, as it has developed since 1699? Is the universal in Sikhism exhausted in its one concrete historical determination? Is the self-development of the universal in Sikhism coming to an end, before its fullest expression? Or will this self-developing logos have its further expressions in other historical determinations? Will Sikhism provide a living ideology that could answer to the cultural, social and political concerns of the Sikhs arising out of their ethno-social and ethno-political development as an 'ethnos' in interaction with the surrounding realities? How are these concerns, arising out of the given spatio-temporal context, going to have orientating influences, if any, upon the future course of Sikhism as a religion and a philosophy? I have not attempted to answer these questions here, nor am I capable of doing so. The light would come from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and in that light we have to face the present and look to the future as enjoined upon us by Guru Nanak :

ਅਗੋਂ ਦੇ ਜੋ ਚੇਤੀਐ¹

ਤਾਂ ਕਾਇਤੁ ਮਿਲੇ ਸਜਾਇ

(But if one were to foresee and forethink—why should he be punished thus)

2

Before we examine the new revolutionary sociology of man introduced by Sikhism, let us first turn to its conceptional schemata.

The metaphysical concepts of Sikh religion bear only terminological similarity with their counterpart in Hinduism; their underlying signification is qualitatively different from Vedantic thought. No doubt vis-a-vis the pre-suppositions of

Western thought the postulates of Sikhism and the classical Vedantic tradition of Hinduism reveal some similarity of approach. But what is important to note is that the fundamental Vedantic postulate about the nature of time and its relationship to reality is different from that of Sikh philosophy. As such, the very system of signification of Sikhism's metaphysical concepts gets altered into a new structure of meanings. This is how the new structure of postulates of Sikhism constitute a distinctive phase in the evolution of India's religious and philosophical thought. The distinctive connotative signification of the Sikh concepts as given in the *Mul Mantra* and elsewhere in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* can be better understood in the semiotic structure of these postulates. This passage from the old to the new postulates corresponds to the transition from the phases of religions-of-Being to the stage of religion-of-Spirit, Sikhism.

Vedantic thought, in its generic form, involves what is known as spatial conception of time as distinct from historical time. Spatial time is conceived of as the space-like container of reality and partakes of all the qualities of space; homogeneity, unity, infinity, continuity, uniformity, directionlessness, reversibility and causal inefficacy. Accordingly, the Real (*Sat*) is that which remains eternal, that is, in the self-same, self-abiding state of *being*—as distinct from becoming—in infinite duration stretching from beginningless past to endless future. Anything which is of the nature of *becoming*, and is subject to the temporal processes of causation, origination, change, development, evolution and disintegration is not "real", but only *maya*, *mithya* or *leela*.

On the other hand, Sikh philosophy involves the conception of real, created, historical time. Time here is not infinity or eternity, but is historicity. That time is not a beginningless infinity is indicated by the expression *Aadi Sachu Jugadi Sachu* in Guru Nanak's *Japuji*. The term *Aadi Sachu* refers to logical priority of the indeterminate Absolute (*Ik Onkar*) before the creation of time, whereas the second term *Jugadi Sachu* reflects the historical primacy of the determinate reality of the Absolute *qua* Spirit in the beginning of (created) time (*jug*).

The conception of historical time is logically entailed by the conception of creation which is central to the Sikh doctrine.

Material existence, phenomenal reality, the universe of man—all this is real creation and not illusory appearance or veiled manifestation caused by *maya-adhyas*, that is, by super-imposition of man's determinate categories of cognition onto what is indeterminate Absolute beyond the grasp of these categories. Time being the mode of existence of phenomenal reality, it has necessarily to be taken as co-created with material reality :

ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਸੈਲ ਜੁਗ ਭਏ²

(God has created matter (mountains) and time (aeons))

Acceptance of the historicity of time implies acceptance of the reality of becoming. In other words, Sikhism accepts the reality of the determinate becoming-in-time in consonance with the reality of the time-transcendent, indeterminate being.

In this context, let us have a look at the other postulates of classical Vedantic tradition and Sikhism.

ਓਅੰਕਾਰਿ ਉਤਪਾਤੀ³

ਕੀਆ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਸਭ ਰਾਤੀ

(God has created all things, all beings—and Day and night also).

Western philosophy is based on classical Greek thought that believed in the multiplicity of universal objective ideas behind the multiplicity of particular phenomena given by man's perceptual mode. For instance, behind every particular straight line, there is the *idea* of straight line; the particular is only an approximation to the universal. These ideas, which are universal (common to all particulars), transcendental (that is, not substantially present in the particulars) and objective (Being not the subjective product of the mind), have their being in a hierarchy headed by the Platonic idea of the Absolute God. In other words, the Absolute, which is the ground and explanation of the particular phenomena is, in a sense, a multiplicity arranged in hierarchised unity. These objective ideas are replaced by subjective ideas of the cognising mind in the Cartesian tradition of Western philosophical ethos. On the other hand, Indian thought has postulated a unity (*sat*) underlying the multiplicity, the variety of phenomena (*tath*). This underlying unity, which is the ultimate principle, ground and

explanation of the phenomenal reality, is given the generic name of *Brahman*. The problem took the form of seeking the Absolute-in-itself behind or beyond its relational expression, as it appears to man through the limiting modes of his cognition, which as such represent a coloured reflection of *Brahman*. In Western thought, it is the (Kantian) *a priori* categories that produce the distorted, coloured (relational) expression of the Real-in-itself: in Indian tradition this is due to the activity of *maya* which is objective and not subjective as in the Kantian pattern. In Advaita Vedanta, the Absolute is the indeterminate (*nirguna*) *Brahman qua* pure, abstract Being with no determinate aspect of its own, nor having any real, determinate relationship which corresponds to the embodiment of *Brahman qua Atman* in human form. Salvation would obviously mean here the *knowledge* that the inner and the outer are identical in nature. This is the self transcendence to a state of abstract being, where the self loses its concrete historicity, its organic existentiality, its subjectivity, its *nam rup* individuality. In Ramanuja's theistic *Vedanta* also, the determinate (*nam rup*) existential reality of the self is sought to be merged into the Absolute as an inflowing river becomes one with the ocean without retaining its distinctiveness. In Sikhism the conception of a *priori* identity of the individual and the Absolute, of the particular and the universal, of the finite and the infinite, is of the nature of an organic relationship expressed in the unity of spirit in which the individual retains its subjectivity, its individuality that is its determinate existentiality :

ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ⁴

(Two forms united in the oneness of spirit)

Self transcendence here means self-realisation in union with God. The human state of being, the bodily form, is not a Fall, or *akarmic* punishment in the shape of separation from *Brahman*; it is rather a God-given opportunity in which the self through self-realisation is transformed from an "object" into a "subject", full of self-consciousness and will power. He comes to partake of the qualities of the Divine given by the ethical attributes of Godhead in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. He, as such, becomes prepared as a self conscious instrument for realising the Divine Will on earth. The *a priori* identity of

spirit between the self and the Absolute becomes an identification of the individual and the Divine Will, at which stage the victory of man in righteous action, as a categorical imperative, comes to be seen as the victory of the Divine (*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*).

Western thought believes that contradiction, opposition of tension is there at the centre of reality. Man becomes aware of the essential lack of harmony at the heart of reality after eating the apple of knowledge. The way to regain the lost paradise of harmony, is dialectical resolution of one conflict in a synthesis that leads to another contradiction in a never-ending series, because the very matrix of reality contains inherent contradiction. Indian speculation on the other hand has posted *a priori* harmony in reality, as also the essential harmony between the micro and the macro reality. It is knowledge (*Gian marg*) that removes the *avidya*-based veil of separation, discord and dis-unity and makes one realise the pre-given harmony at the heart of reality, as against the Western tradition in which knowledge led to the awareness of basic contradiction in the womb of reality. *Brahman* is not only *Sat Chit* but *anand* also, which means a state of harmony calmness, equilibrium, equipoise. In fact this characteristic of *Brahman* flows from its homogeneity given by the underlying spatial conception of time. In cosmic life this inner harmony is reflected in the Vedic concept of *rit*. In Sankhya philosophy of the three *gunas* of *prakriti* subsist in a state of equilibrium disturbance of which causes evolution of *Sansara*. In individual life, the principle of harmony takes the form of *nirvan* in Buddhism and *Samadhi* in yoga—The corresponding state in Sikhism being *sehaj awastha* but with a qualitative difference in that it is not a state of passive but of dynamic, active equilibrium. In Sikhism the Vedantic concept of harmony takes the form of orderliness of cosmos indicated by the term *hukum*. All elements of nature are working in orderliness.

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨਾ ਕੋਇ⁵

(All are subject to the Divine Will, with none beyond its pale)

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਵਣੁ ਵਹੈ ਸਦ ਵਾਉ । ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ⁶

(In the Divine Order (Fear) blows the air with its numerous breezes—In His Order, Flow a myriad river)

Two other concepts, based on historical time, were correlated to this conception. First, that nature or matter contains not only the pattern of orderliness, but also the principle of motion and activity that makes the universe autonomously moving, and self-developing under Divine teleology, inherent in temporal processes that are seen as moving towards purposive direction for realising the Will of God on earth, just as *Khalsa* was created for realising the Divine Will in society, in history, says Guru Nanak in Japuji :

ਏਕਾ ਮਾਈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਵਿਆਈ ਤਿਨਿ ਚੇਲੇ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ
ਇਕੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੀ ਇਕੁ ਭੰਡਾਰੀ ਇਕੁ ਲਾਏ ਦੀਬਾਣੁ⁷

(Matter mysteriously conceived three sons. One produces, the second sustains and the third destroys).

The Sikh Prophet says here that matter in some mysterious union with consciousness conceived and came to partake of the three principles (symbolised by the three traditional Hindu deities) of origination, development and disintegration, which from within operate the universe, thereby making it an autonomous world with inherent temporal processes programmed for realising God's design. The external Divine Will, having *once* charged the universe, works as the internal law (*hukum*) of the autonomous world.

ਜੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸੁ ਏਕਾ ਵਾਰੁ⁸

(What He willed, He put into the World once for all)

The notion of time and reality here is different from the Vedantic schemata woven around the formula *the real is eternal and what is eternal alone is real*. On the other hand the world of time and space, of change, and development, in Sikhism, is impermanent but not unreal permanence (the continuation of a thing in its self-same state of being in all time) is no more equated with reality.

The classical Hindu tradition of thought that had equated permanence with reality in its conception of *sat*, based on spatial time, provided for stability of social system but at the cost of mobility, development and progress. The traditional role of the Hindu *Avatar* is just to restore the disturbed equilibrium by reasserting *Dharma* as the Divine obligation to perform the duties of one's *Karma*-determined, fixed station in life.

With the new conception of reality accepting the existentiality of change, Sikhism played a revolutionary role in heralding a new ethos, a new social system, grounded in new metaphysical postulates and concepts. A revolutionary value pattern emerged that was distinct and different from the earlier Hindu civilization. God, man and society were bound together in organic wholeness. The universe of time and place, being both *creation* and *abode* of the Divine, came to be looked upon as real. This worldly concerns of man, as such, also came under focus. The self *in relation to God* retained its *nam-rup* existentiality; the Divine union meant the unity of spirit, and not the self—submerging unity of substance. Salvation, thus, came to be seen as self-realization in the Absolute (*jiwan mukti*) and not self—annihilation. The self *in relation to society* kept intact its individuality, and was no more required to be subsumed under holistic categories of society (say, of caste). Further, the self *in relation to itself* regained the organic unity of its spiritual, rational and sensory aspects in harmony known as *sehaj awastha*. The innate goodness of man was stressed as also that of the human state of being. Evil was derived not from the aboriginal sinful nature of man, or the *karmic* recompense, or the state of embodiment of (disassociated) man in phenomenal form; it was, rather, traced back to the contingent imperfection and perversion of social system, with a belief in the essential perfectibility of society through collective, organized social efforts. The earthly life of man was soon as possessing an autonomy of its own; with it secular life also came to have its own sanctity and was no more dismissed as the domain of the profane requiring ritualistic purification in its various stages. A new social structure was envisaged that provided for vertical mobility through a new process different from what has been termed as sanskritization.

The predication of reality in terms of permanence, constancy and eternity corresponds to the homeostatic tendency of traditional Hindu social structure with pre-determined fixity as its normative basis. Traditional Brahminical society was based on the notion of the pre-determined, fixed hierarchy as the normative principle of social organization; the caste system was the expression of this principle of fixity. Brahminical society permitted upward movement of the lower sections onto the

higher levels through a cultural process named sanskritization by M.N. Srinivas⁹; a lower group of caste, having circumstantially acquired wealth or power, would be admitted into the higher structure of the caste-bound society only after giving up its original identity, and emulating and adopting the caste denominations and behaviour patterns of the higher castes. A lower caste was not conceded any sanctity or legitimacy in its own right and in its own self—identity, even if it had gained power and pelf. For instance, in the South the *Shudra* rulers had to assume the *Kshatrya* status after undergoing a symbolic re-birth through the ceremony of golden cow; this was considered essential for getting political legitimacy as well as social respectability. Simulation and imitation of the ethos, manners and rituals of the higher group by a status-seeking lower group was considered necessary. This process of sanskritization made room for upward movement of lower sections, while reinforcing the fixed hierarchy of the system.

Revolting against the ideal of fixed hierarchy as the normative principle of social organization, Guru Nanak, in his equalitarian mission, rejected what later came to be described as the sanskritization process for upward movement and respectability at the higher levels of society :

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ
ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ
ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ
ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ
ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ¹⁰

(The lowest of the low castes, The lowliest of the lowly, I seek their kinship, Why emulate the (so-called) higher ones, Thy elevating grace is Where the down-trodden are looked after).

On the same wavelength, says Sant Ravi Dass that he who is most pious is *shudra*.

'Ravidas jau at pyir hai, soi shudra jan'

Here was a new revolutionary approach that provided social equality, moral sanctity, political legitimacy and vertical mobility for the lower castes and sections of society in their own right, and with their own self-identity. It was this approach

that was institutionalized by Guru Gobind Singh through the baptismal ceremony of *amrit*, thereby providing a new sociological principle, channel and process of vertical movement of the lower strata in society—a new kind of vertical mobility that *ipso-facto* involves an ongoing process of restructuration of nonhierarchical, open society on the basis of equality. Nawab Jassa Singh, who attained to the highest politico—military leadership of the Sikhs in the eighteenth century, continued to be known as *Kalal* (distiller of wine) in self—glorification of his low—caste identity. This, in a sense, symbolizes the new value-system of Sikhism.

Another characteristic of the Sikh value pattern relates to the vesting of sovereignty in the *Khalsa*. The Divine Spirit descends in historical time through the Guru-person and becomes self-determinate and manifest in society. The spiritual sovereignty of God becomes self-conscious in the *Guru Granth* and the temporal sovereignty of the Divine becomes immanent in the *Khalsa Panth*; here the *Khalsa* means a sociological category of full-fledged sovereign peoplehood. The notion of political sovereignty vesting neither in the king as his divine right, nor in any ice-deity like Christian Pope or Muslim Khalifa, nor in the State nor in the Party, but in society brought India to the threshold of modern democratic, republican polity.

Sikhism involves a federal conception of polity and a pluralistic conception of society. The relationship of the individual to a society and of a group (religious, ethnic etc.) to state is patterned after man's relationship with God in which he retains his self-identity—there being no submerging of concrete existantiality into undifferentiated oneness. On sociological level, this means that a group has an inviolable right to participate in its *corporate capacity* in the body politic of society, and further that there should be no homogenization of individual or group identities into monistic uniformity.

Religious, cultural and political pluralism is the message of Sikhism for the contemporary world afflicted by the growing trends of State totalitarianism, political unitarianism and religious-cultural homogenisation. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is one of the greatest living examples of pluralism.

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SIKH VALUES IN A DIALOGIC PERSPECTIVE

DR BALKAR SINGH

Value by definition can be perceived as the concomitant of self actualization and self transcendence in the social context. It is why the value system is both human and beyond human. It is social and trans-social as well, which follows that the value is a practised truth in social praxis. Nobody has ever denied the existence of values in the universe but only a few are convinced over its absolute nature. In spite of the all-round erosion, the need of values cannot be gainsaid. Incidentally religion allows itself to be used for this erosion. The negative consciousness (ego) pushes the values in descending direction. The revelatory context of this degradation can perhaps be drawn from all the revelatory religions. All the major religious traditions are proud of the role, they played in reversing the descending order into the ascending one and this paper aims at bringing such a role into bold relief. Such a dialogic perspective of the religion is an oriental base on which stand the values created, established and followed in society. Religion stands for cultivating the intellect and an exercise in purity of the soul, even though religion is mostly misunderstood as a medium and ideal. There can be so many latent and patent reasons for this aberration but the one which occurs to my mind in the present context is the absence of the qualifying part of the religion. It is because of the prevalent misconception that one belongs to the religion by birth. This has misled religion to the wrong direction, consequently pushing it towards the unhealthy competition among the religions. Instead it drags itself out of it, each religion engaged in disparaging the other in such a situation. The only way to come out of this abysmal situation is to ponder over the revelatory process and position.

Bhagavadgita guides in the degraded religious situation by telling us of battle, stern and fierce, of resistance to *adharma*,

wherever it is. The Master Himself descends again and again in a human body, to restore *dharma* and to uproot *adharma*. Consciousness of living up to this is important, otherwise, this perspective will be reduced to just statement. Perspective opens the opportunities for all while statement limits the opportunities for the followers only. When statement has the edge over the perspective, the dialogic possibilities are ruled out. The need of the time is to rise above the label of being followers only and establish the intrinsic unity of the religions of the world.

The religions are often defined as static and dynamic largely as an allegation of one religion against the others. The accusation is the outcome of a wide gap between theory and practice of the religions in reference, reducing it to a mere cerebral drill resulted into unhealthy competition. In such unhealthy competitive situation religions are forced to confine and enter into anti dialogic position. Here, in the language of Spinoza people who prefers and boast of religion as love, peace, temperance and charity to all men, quarrel with bitter animosity. Religion will have to come out of this misunderstanding and the minimum to be done is to establish an intra active dialogue between all the religions.

Sikhism has chosen to tread this path because it has definite claim to be an open religion and it sheds all the 'closed' concerns stressing the reciprocity in thought and living. Guru Nanak reveals the spiritual context of this dialogic concern:

While life in the world lasts, for a while listen to
God's Name; for a while utter it.

Long have we sought it, living for long is not
attainable.

Best it is to die while living.² (the best it would be
to live in death).

So ever fresh and ever lasting value concerns are real because 'Is' and 'ought' have been harmonised in it. The parallelism between 'is' and 'ought' or practice and theory in the interaction of values is not acceptable in any religion. This consciousness

is the central concern of the values. The speed of value evolution and in such a situation the injected values become the need of the concerned. This borrowing or peripheral model remains rootless. So to be rooted in revelation, tradition, culture and history are other central concerns of the dialogic values. If the theory and practice remain parallel, the dogmatic context becomes the concern of the values. Sheikh Farid avers :

Those alone are true devotees whose heart with God is sincerely in love.

The one whose heart is belied by their tongue are known to be inconstant.³

The basis of religious value is commitment realised and truth lived. One will have to qualify for it. The system for this qualifying process is laid down by all religions. Guru Nanak clearly differentiates between the ugly and beautiful values :

Those that are dark wells of ignorance understand not the tradition of religion.

Are blind of mind, their minds are upturned lotuses, Hideous their aspect.

Some know how religion to expound, and whatever is stated, Realised-such are of pleasing aspects.⁴

In the context of dialogic values, though peripheral but important factors are feelings, desires, interests, relationships and ideals. The theoretical basis of all the above mentioned factors is another important concern of the values. The quietism and asceticism are hardly appreciated in Sikhism. Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Nanak presents an explicit model for a dynamic living :

Saith Nanak : By contact with the Master the true device of living perfected.

In a life of smiling playfulness, enjoyment of wear and food is attained liberation.⁵

These values do play a very significant role in making the life responsive, dynamic and healthy. It creates mutual understanding with the result flowering into humanity. And what kind of person is needed for such a dialogue ? Bhagat Namdev says that dialogue can only be established with such persons

who have faith in God and love in humanity :

Such as to the Lord are not devoted,
Their sight would I not wish to see.⁶

Another saint Ravidas makes this perspective more clear. Dialogic system cannot afford any barrier between man and man. A system for the dignity of man is envisaged where suffering, sorrow and fear end. Such a habitat is named as the city of eternal joy and the denizens of this city are termed as fraternal beings:

Saith Ravidas, the cobbler, freed from all bonds,
Whocver of that city is dweller, is our friend.⁷

In the context of religion, the basis for the brotherhood of man is clearly laid down by the two saints referred to above. Their revelation forms a part of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, identified as the ultimate or eternal Guru of the Sikhs. The very correlating and editing plan of this sacred *Granth* provides a dialogic model to the world. It covers a wide range of revelation in religious tradition right from the twelfth century to the seventeenth century A.D. in India. The contributors of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* transcend all geographical barriers. The sections of society which are represented through these contributors were proclaimed outcastes in India. Sikh Gurus established a dialogic contact with them through their revelations. Oneness of realised truth was common ground there. From here starts the dialogic perspective in Sikhism. The revelatory proofs for this and the insights concerning dialogic possibilities are available in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. The value model which emerges out of this is for the protection of the whole world lascerating in the flower flames. Guru Amardas says :

Save by Thy grace, the World in flames,
Save it at whatever portal it may be saved.⁸

Ignorance is the major impediment in the dialogic system. One can transcend this in the company of the saint called *sangat*. An all embracing attitude is the natural product of it. Guru Arjan Dev guides us in this situation :

Put away from my mind is envy of others,
As company of the holy I have attained. (Pause)
None now is our foe not a stranger,
With all are we in accord.⁹

After this scriptural evidence, we can confidently go to the chapters in the Sikh history. One exemplary Sikh Bhai Ghanayya, a devout desciple of the Tenth Master and the founder of the *Seva Panthi* stands distinct, serving water to the wounded friends and foes alike. Common Kitchen (*Lunger*) for all exists in the sikh traditon. People of all faiths are free to have food there. The daily prayer of the Sikhs includes wishing good will for all (*Sarbat dā bhalā*). With All sides open, Sikh holy place (*Gurudwara*) and a free entry therein for all indicates a lot for dialogic structure. The believers those who profess the faith without adopting the formalistic tenets are called "*Sahajdhari*". They are as good part of the Sikh community as the initiated themselves are. It clearly indicates the direction of the Sikh values. One will have to reach these values. Only those are the heirs of these virtues who qualify to be the heirs. Religious awakening is the only model which can cement the human concerns. This model is heritage based and conscious orientated. Guru Arjan Dev accepts this as the satisfying medium for the humanity :

As the treasure house of my ancestors have I opened
and viewed.

Is my mind with joy in true wealth filled.¹⁰

The threat to this model comes from the materialistic political approach, thwarting the possibility of a liberal religious dialogue. Even the concept of religious pluralism is no alternative. Unhealthy competition among religions breeds unavoidable challenges, questions and eroding concerns. The secular approach is currently taken to be as anti religious approach. Majority anarchy in the field of religion is eroding the dialogic context. Guru Nanak provided a way out for such a situation. Man is man first and religious afterwards. So Man, first of all, must qualify to be a man :

God's true devotees however, are those
Who to have sight of Him.¹¹

The ideal for such a man is further clarified :

With the gift of human incarnation granted to Thee,
Now is thy opportunity to have union with the
Lord.¹²

This indicates that one should be truthful to one's own religion. The contemporary religious leaders of the Guru period (1469 to 1699) such as *Pandits*, *Yogis* and *Qazis* are advised to come up to their honorifics. From here Guru starts the dialogue with the contemporary religions. Here it should be made clear that the inner evidence of *Guru Granth Sahib* helps in establishing that this dialogic model, in no way comes out of an amalgamated approach, nor there is any need of limiting or reducing Sikhism to continuity of any religion. The dialogic context of Sikh values is undoubtedly independent. The mission of Guru Nanak transcends all barriers and carry along all embracing concerns. So the religious values are concerned with the soul of the age only. Those values can be considered dialogic which are universal in nature. Local values of any religion, being need based and schismatic in expression, are not compatible with the dialogic system. Value is rooted in worthiness. Worthiness is a qualifying concern. Training of the intellect and purity of the soul are for the attainment of such a dialogue. Bhagat Kabir says about religious branding as under:

Those branded on the battlefield give fight;
Those unbranded take to flight.¹³

The basis for the values and dialogue are given in this paper from Sikh revelation i.e. *Bani*. It is dialogic model from Sikhism and for the dialogue of partners. The concrete proposals for inter-religious dialogue can also be put forward on the basis of *Bani*. The closing seal of *Guru Granth Sahib* called *Mundavani* declares truth, contentment and contemplation as the qualifying principles for interreligious dialogue. These cannot be discarded. It indicates the need of religion for man. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Nanak puts this as under :

In this salver are lying three viands—truth, content
and contemplation.
Also lying in it is the Lord's ambrosial Name,
Substance of all existence.
Whoever partakes of it, consumes it,
Saved shall be.
This substance no way can be discarded—
Ever in heart cherish it.

The world, darkness — enveloped by touch of the
 Master's feet is crossed;
 Thus saith Nanak, all that is visible
 Is seen as manifestation of the Supreme Being.¹⁴

REFERENCES

1. Bhagavadgita, IV, 7.
 Yadā-yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
 abhyutthānam adharmasya tada 'tmānam sṛjamy aham.
2. Guru Granth Sahib, M. 1, p. 661.
 Jab lagu dunīyā rahīai Nānak kichhu sunīai kichhu kahīai
 Bhāli rahe ham rahaṇu na pāia jivatīa mari rahīai.
3. Ibid., Baba Farid, p. 488.
 Dilhu muhabati jin seī sachīa
 Jin mani horu mukhi horu se kādhe kachīa
4. Ibid., M. 1, pp. 1245-46.
 Manhu je andhai kūp kahīa birdu na jāṇani
 Manu andhai ūndhai kavali disani khare karūp.
 Ik kahi jāṇahi kahīa bujhahi te nar sughaṛ surūp.
5. Ibid., M. 5, p. 522.
 Nānak satiguri bhetīai pūrī hovai jugati
 Hasandīa khelandīa painandīa viche hovai mukati.
6. Ibid., Bhagat Namdev, p. 1163.
 Jo na bhajante Nārāiṇā
 Tinkā mai nā karau darsnā
7. Ibid, Bhagat Ravidas, p. 345.
 Kahi Ravidās khlās chamārā
 Jo ham saharī su mītu hamārā
8. Ibid., Salok M. 3. p. 853.
 Jagatu jalandā rakhi lai āpaṇī kirpā dhārī
 jitu duārāi ubrai titai laiḥu ubārī
9. Ibid., M. 5, p. 1299.
 Bisari gaī sabh tāti parāī jab te sādḥ sangati mohi pāi
 na ko bairi nāhi bigānā sagal sangi ham kau bani aāī
10. Ibid, M. 5, p. 186.
 Piū dāde kā kholi dithā khajānā.
 Tā merai mani bhaīa nidhānā
11. Ibid, Shalok M, 1, p, 465
 Bande se ji pavahi vichi bandī vekhaṇ kau dīdār.
12. Ibid, M. 5, p. 378.
 Bhaī prāpati mānukh dehurīa.
 Gobind milaṇ kī ih terī barīa.
13. Ibid., Bhagat Kabir, p. 970.
 Dāge hohi su ran mahi jūjhahi binu dāge bhāg jāi.
14. Ibid., M. 5, p. 1429.

ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS SEMINAR

A healthy discussion was carried on by the learned scholars on the papers. The scholars were asked to note the questions posed on their papers and the answers given by them in a written form, so that they could be published along with the papers. I tried to note some of them and I am giving their summary below.

Dr. Kehar Singh presented his paper on "Sikh Political Values—An Analysis" The questions are as below :

1. The thesis of Sikh polity presented by you, it seems as if it was not available in Indian civilisation before that. Was there not any tradition of being religious-oriented (*Dharamhetu*) ?
2. Is the *Panj Pardhāni* (Supremacy of five ones) model an ideal one in Sikh religion or there can be any ideal ?
3. Is not the conduct of Maharaja Ranjit Singh according to Sikhism ?
4. Unanimity is not possible. If it is not possible then how will you interpret the consensus with unanimity in Sikhism ?
5. Secularism has been attached with unholiness. The problem in the Europe was the problem of state and Church, not of holi and unholi ?
6. Dr. Upinder Jit Kaur : It is said that the stress has not been laid on any special set up but in the end it is said that democratic values have been encouraged ? The present ruling system is not according to the Sikh set up because Sikhism is not based on majority consensus. How do you explain it ?
7. Dr. Kuldeep Singh Dhir ; How to make "*Panch Pardhani*" ?
8. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh came into power then Sikh values got deteriorated. He did not accept the

Sikh values in total. The question is what is the mobility and motivating power of the system ?

9. Dr. Mittal : We find the concept of *Panj Parmeshar* in many forms in our culture. When the *Panj Pyārās* are selected who they are ? Is it that only those will be selected with unanimity ? Who are the sustainers of values ? Religion should not be related with politics. It is high and above politics. It keeps the human values before it. To bear the human values is the function of religion.
10. Dr. Prakash Singh Jammu : Is it really so that in the Indian system the benefits of the people are cared for ?
11. Principal Gurmukh Singh asked whether the Gurus prepared the Sikhs in their *Bāni* to rule worldly ?
12. Prof. Gulwant Singh told that we do not find any strict indications about the relation between religion and politics as we find the concept of the sword of Islam. Abdul Quiddus Gangohi, a contemporary of Guru Nanak, wrote a letter to Babar in which he told him what is Dar-ul-Islam. He told him that since India is Dar-ul-Islam so every non-Muslim should be insulted and humiliated and kept away from the revenue posts. Dar-ul-Islam is an area where Islam is supreme, governing every aspect of individual and collective life. *Badshah* is just to keep the Islam high. We can understand the view-point of the revolutionary Guru Nanak from his attitude towards Babur. Guru Nanak considers him the bridegroom who rushed down from Kabul with the wedding party of sin. Prof. Gulwant Singh suggested that we should stress upon the conceptual things in the Sikh value-system e.g. humanitarianism, compassion, benevolence. Sikhism is not giving a theory something like Dar-ul-Islam. This is a theory which is beneficial for the Majority.
13. Principal Harbhajan Singh said that on the one side we have the tradition of *Jathedars*, the selection of *Pyārās* (the beloved ones) and on the other side there was a tradition when only the *Sardars* were to speak. They used to do prayer that all of us are one before the

Guru. We are talking all confusion. S.G.P.C. is a class according to an act which further appoints the *Jathedār* who is supreme. This method of the appointment of the *Jathedars* was not in practice at that time. *Sangat* (congregation) is something different and the gathering of the people is something else. *Sangat* (congregation) was great, not the gathering of the people. The present situation which has arisen now, there is no answer to it. We have lost in these things. Was *miri* for the fulfillment of the *piri* or *piri* should be for the fulfillment of the *miri*? Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not an ideal.

14. Dr. Narinder Singh Kapoor told that there may be any type of rule but it always consists of two parts i.e. the duty and the privilege. When the duty dominates then everything is in its right place. But when the privilege dominates there is always upheaval.

We can not ignore the concept of *Gur-gadi*. Dr. Madanjit Kaur told that how *Sarbat Khālsā* had been being held, there is lying a three pages document in Aligarh University.

The answers were given as follows :

Dr. Kehar Singh told that he has no difference of opinion with Prof. Gulwant Singh. As for as principal Harbhajan Singh's question is concerned he told that he has two-fold opinion about Maharaja Ranjit Singh. As for as the Sikh psyche is concerned we are not ready to talk about less than perfection but perfection is never possible. Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled to hand over the kingdom to the Sikh *Panth*. Most parts of the history has been presented in a distorted manner. Those people wrote the history who were not in favour of the Sikhs. If this model had not come from *Gurbānī* then from where does it come? There was no theory of religion-oriented polity in Indian culture. The Sikh moves with this polity. This is the matter of theoretical background. But the theory is of being religion-oriented. If a human-being could not fulfill it, that is his weakness. *Panj-Parmeshar* and *Panj Pyārās* are two different things. There is a difference in the selection of *Panj Pyārās* and *Panj Parmeshar*. There is no distinction of caste and birth. They are selected by the *sangat*. Secular and state,

because of all the conditions neither these are ours, nor these can be. He said this is the reason behind choosing this method by him.

There were some more questions asked to Dr. T. S. Sodhi and others. For example how to remove the things which create dichotomy? What were the means with them to teach these values to the masses e. g. the *Gurdwara*, *Janam Sakhis* or some other means and methods like that? How in the surrender of will education tries to transcend. Religious medium is corrective but it has got its own limitations? The answer to all these questions was that the total humanity was not mobilised. The efforts were made for the better things. Dr. Sodhi told that what he understood in this field is the method of formal channel and non-formal channel which he has discussed in his paper and how the values are cultivated in Sikh value system. They are by the active participation.

A very good paper was presented by Dr. Pritam Gill. I am sorry that soon after the seminar he shifted to England and could not give us the paper in written form. Dr. Darshan Singh, Dr. Upinderjit Kaur, Dr. Parkash Singh Jammu and Dr. Gurtarn Singh presented their papers in Punjabi language which we have published else where. One question by Dr. Lal was asked to Dr. Pritam Gill that the need for reconciliation has not been realised and what about Marxism which says that religion is the opium of the masses? Dr. Singh pointed out that there is no forcible conversion in Sikhism. Dr. Mittal pointed out that let the example of Sohan Singh Bhakna be taken. There is no difference between believers (*āstik*) and non-believers (*nāstik*). This cannot be agreed upon in Sikhism. If it is not acceptable at all, and if we are failed in bringing about egalitarianism then why to get upset? Why not to take refuge in Him? Why not to follow the Guru? He pointed out that instead of taking the recent examples we should go into the history. Theoretically active practical orientation has given birth to the progressive Punjab. Total progress is due to religious ideas, not due to economic factors. The example of the Protestants also exhibits that religious ideas can also inspire towards the good side. So we are to achieve the egalitarianism through religion. Capitalism, Socialism, we do not know when to use which term. We are to concentrate upon the ideal placed before us by the Guru.

Dr. Kehar Singh made the comment that whether Dr. Upinderjit Kaur is confusing classes and castes? There is a distinction between caste and class. The end of castes will not end the classes. In class system there is an accumulation of power in few hands. All the possibilities as human being can not be exhausted in materialistic society. Principal Amarjit Singh commented that socialism and Sikhism are two different ideas. Both cannot go together. Is it possible that Sikhism can be attainable in socialism? Dr. Upinderjit Kaur told that there is a freedom of production in Sikhism while working with your own hands, but one is not to think about increasing his profits. That is why it is near to socialism. Dr. Avtar Singh commented upon what is the meaning of humanism? In Sikh context it is not humanism but humanitarianism. A particular idea may be favourable to the human knowledge but that does not mean that it leads to capitalism. It is the structure which leads to capitalism. Egalitarian social order can be achieved. Castes and classes can be removed. In Sikhism it is also said that one can not meditate if he is hungry. The spiritual needs arise when one's daily needs are fulfilled. Marxism is deficient in developing the subjective needs. The relation between economic development and culture is very complex. Some cultures promote it and others discourage it.